

South Asian arts

South Asian arts, the literary, performing, and visual arts of India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka.

Despite a history of ethnic, linguistic, and political fragmentation, the people of the Indian subcontinent are unified by a common cultural and ethical outlook; a wealth of ancient textual literature in Sanskrit, Prākṛit, and regional languages is a major unifying factor. Music and dance, ritual customs, modes of worship, and literary ideals are similar throughout the subcontinent, even though the region has been divided into kaleidoscopic political patterns through the centuries.

The close interrelationship of the various peoples of South Asia may be traced in their epics, as in the *Rāmāyaṇa* and the *Mahābhārata*. Kinship between the gods and heroes of regions far distant from each other is evident, and the place-names themselves often evoke common sources. Moreover, there have been continual attempts to impose a political unity over the region. In the 3rd century BC, for example, the emperor Aśoka had almost all of this region under his sway; in the 11th century AD, Rājendra I Cōḷa conquered almost the whole of India and a good portion of Southeast Asia; and the great Mughal Akbar again achieved this in the 16th century. Though the expansion and attenuation of boundary lines, the bringing together or pulling apart politically of whole regions, have characterized all of South Asian history, the culture has remained essentially one.

The geography of the region encouraged a common adoration of mountains and rivers. The great Himalayas, which form the northern boundary, are the loftiest of mountains and are conceived to be the embodiment of nobility, the abode of immaculate snow, and the symbol of a cultural ideal. Similarly, the great rivers such as the Brahmaputra and the Indus are regarded as the mothers of their respective regions, assuring prosperity through their perennial supply of water.

The association of lakes and springs with water sprites and sylvan fairies, called *nāgas* and *yakṣas*, is common throughout the region. Karkoṭa, the name of an early dynasty, itself signifies *nāga* worship in Kashmir. Sculptures of *nāgas* and *yakṣas* found in widespread sites suggest a common spirit of adoration, as do sculptures, paintings, temples, and religious texts that for centuries were preserved within an oral tradition without losing their

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immaculate intonation. The same classical dance is seen in sculpture in Gandhāra in Pakistan, in Bhārhut in the north, and in Amarāvātī in the south.

The relation of the various arts to each other is very close in South Asia, where proficiency in several arts is necessary for specialization in any one. Thus, it is believed that without a good knowledge of dance there can be no proficiency in sculpture, for dance, like painting or sculpture, is a depiction of all the world. For its rhythmic movements and exposition of emotion, dance also requires musical accompaniments; hence, knowledge of musical rhythm is essential. For the stirring of emotion either in music or in dance, knowledge of literature and rhetoric is believed to be necessary; the flavour (*rasa*) to be expressed in music, dance, sculpture, or painting requires a literary background. Thus all the arts are closely linked together.

The arts were cultivated in South Asia not only as a noble pastime but also in a spirit of dedication, as an offering to a god. Passages in literature refer to princes studying works of art for possible defects. One inscription that mentions the name of the *sūtra-dhāra* (“architect”) of the 8th-century Mallikārjuna temple at Pattadakal epitomizes the accomplishments and ideals, in both theory and practice, of the artist.

Artists traditionally have enjoyed a high position in South Asian societies. Poets, musicians, and dancers held honoured seats in the royal court. An inscription mentions the appreciation bestowed by Rājendra Cōla on a talented dancer, and the architect of the temple at Tiruvorriyūr, who was also patronized by Rājendra, was eulogized for his encyclopaedic knowledge of architecture and art. Nonetheless, the folk arts were closely linked with the elite arts. Tribal group dances, for example, shared common elements with classical art, dance, and music. Among the artistic traditions of the Indian subcontinent, sculpture in the round (*citra*) is considered the highest artistic expression of form, and sculpture in relief (*ardhacitra*) is next in importance. Painting (*citrābhāsa*, literally “the semblance of sculpture”) ranks third. Feeling for volume was so great that the effect of chiaroscuro (*i.e.*, use of light and shade to indicate modelling) was considered very important in painting; a passage from a drama of the 5th-century poet Kālidāsa describes how the eye tumbles over the heights and depths suggested in the modelling of a painting. A classical text on art, *Citrasūtra* enumerates noteworthy factors in paintings: the line sketch, firmly and gracefully drawn, is considered the highest element by the masters; shading and depiction of modelling are valued by others; the decorative element appeals to feminine taste; and the splendour of colour appeals to common taste. The use of a minimum of drawing to produce the maximum effect in suggesting form is considered most admirable.

Portraits play an important role in the visual arts of South Asia, and there are many literary references to the effective depiction of portraits both in painting and in sculpture. A 6th-century text, the *Viṣṇudharmottara*, classifies portraiture into natural, lyrical, sophisticated, and mixed, and men and women are classified into types by varieties of hair—long and fine, curling to right, wavy, straight and flowing, curled and abundant; similarly, eyes may be

bow-shaped, of the hue of the blue lotus, fishlike, lotus-petal-like, or globular. Artistic stances are enumerated, and principles of foreshortening are explained. Paintings or sculptures were believed to take after their creators, even as a poem reflects the poet.

Although South Asia has continually been subjected to strong outside influences, it has always incorporated them into native forms, resulting not in imitation but in a new synthesis. This may be seen even in the art of the Gandhāra region of Pakistan, which in the 4th century BC was immersed in Greco-Roman tradition. In the sculpture of this period Indian themes and modes have softened the Western style. Foreign influence is evident after the invasion of the Kushāns in the 1st century AD, but the native element predominated and overwhelmed the foreign influence. During the Mughal period, from the 16th century, when Muslims from Central Asia reigned in South Asia, the blend of Iranian and Indian elements produced a predominantly Indian school that spread throughout the region, making it a unified cultural area under imperial rule. The influence of Islāmic art was enhanced by the second Mughal emperor, Humāyūn, who imported painters from the court of the Shāh of Persia and began a tradition that blended Indian and Persian elements to produce an efflorescence of painting and architecture.

Art in all these regions reflects a system of government, a set of moral and ethical attitudes, and social patterns. The desire of kings to serve the people and to take care of them almost as offspring is evident as early as the 3rd century BC. The ideal of the king as the unrivalled bowman, the unifier, the tall and stately noble spirit, the sacrificer for the welfare of the subjects, and the hero of his people (who conceive of him on a stately elephant) is comprehensively illustrated in a magnificent series of coins from the Gupta Empire of North India of the 4th–6th centuries. The concepts of righteous conquest and righteous warfare are illustrated in sculpture. The long series of sculptures illustrating the history of the South Indian Pallava dynasty of the 4th–9th centuries gives an excellent picture of the various activities of government—such as war and conquests, symbolic horse sacrifices, the king's council, diplomatic receptions, peace negotiations, the building of temples, appreciation of the fine arts (including dance and music), and the coronation of kings—all clearly demonstrating what an orderly government meant to the people. Similarly, moral attitudes are illustrated in sculptures that lay stress on *dharma*—customs or laws governing duty. The doctrine of *ahimsā*, or noninjury to others, is often conceived symbolically as a deer, and the ideal of a holy place is represented as a place where the deer roams freely. The joy in giving and renunciation is clearly indicated in art. Sculptures illustrate simple and effective stories, as from the *Pañca-tantra*, one of the oldest books of fables in the world. The spirit of devotion, faith, and respect for moral standards that has throughout the centuries pervaded the subcontinent's social structure is continuously represented in South Asian painting and sculpture.

Calambur Sivaramamurti

Literature

The peoples of South Asia have had a continuous literature from the first appearance in the Punjab of a branch of the Indo-European-speaking peoples who also settled all of Europe and Iran. In India this branch of Indo-Aryans, as they are usually called, met earlier inhabitants with different languages and no doubt a different culture—possibly a culture akin to that of the Indus Valley civilization, which had a script, and perhaps a literature of its own, of which nothing is known. Certain to have been settled in India were peoples who spoke languages of Dravidian origin, as well as other languages, called Munda, now preserved only by aboriginal tribes, which show affinities with the languages of Southeast Asia.

The earliest literature is of a sacred character and dates from about 1400 BC in the form of the Rigveda. This work stands at the beginning of the literature of the Veda, or canonical Hindu sacred writings, which as a whole is roughly contemporary with the settlement of the Indo-Aryan peoples in the Punjab and farther east, in the mesopotamia of the Ganges and Yamunā rivers. The language of the Rigveda, which is a compilation of hymns to the high gods of the Aryan religion, is complex and archaic. It was simplified and codified in the course of the centuries from 1000 to 500 BC, which saw the development of prose commentaries called the *Brāhmaṇas*, *Āraṇyakas*, and *Upaniṣads*. While there must have been a long tradition of grammarians, the final codification of the language is ascribed to Pāṇini (5th or 6th century BC), whose grammar has remained normative for the correct language ever since. This language is called Sanskrit (Tongue Perfected). Sanskrit has had a scarcely interrupted literature from about 600 BC until today, but its greatest efflorescence was in the classical period, from the 1st to 7th centuries AD. Because it was identified with the Brahminical religion of the Vedas, reform movements such as Buddhism and Jainism disdained the use of Sanskrit and adopted literary languages—amalgams of different dialects of the parent language—of their own, Pāli in Buddhism and Ardhamāgadhī in Jainism. These languages, usually called Prākritis—that is, derivative as well as more “natural” languages—produced a vast and, again, mostly sacred literature. In a further development of these dialects, the early beginnings can be seen of modern Indo-Aryan languages of northern India: Bengali (also the language of Bangladesh), Hindi (the official language of the Republic of India since 1947), Rajasthani, Punjabi, Gujarati, Marathi, Kashmiri, Oriya, Assamese, and Sindhi, each of which produced a literature of its own. Their names are derived from the regions in which they are spoken, regions with uncertain boundaries, where the different dialects fused at the borders. They all retained a close family resemblance that made bilingualism easy and a fact of Indian literary life.

Far more marked was the difference between Indo-Aryan speech and the languages of the Dravidian family, which are structurally wholly different, though in time a measure of convergence took place. Among them, the oldest recorded is Tamil, now the language of Tamil Nadu (Madras) state and of northern Sri Lanka, whose literature goes back to the early centuries of the Christian Era. Later to be put to literary uses were the cognate Telugu

(Andhra Pradesh), Kannada (or Kanarese, Mysore state), and Malayalam (Kerala state) languages.

In spite of this linguistic differentiation, the literatures composed in all of these languages reflect, in different degrees, the monumental influence of Sanskrit literature, Sanskrit being the universal Indian language of culture. This influence was one of both substance and form: in substance it provided the basic themes of literary enterprise, notably through the epics, the *Mahābhārata* and *Rāmāyaṇa*, the Hindu popular texts of the *Purāṇas*, especially the *Bhāgavata*, and the mythological repertory that came with Sanskritic Hinduism; in form, Sanskrit belles lettres bequeathed models of literary composition, and Sanskrit poetics provided the aesthetic theory underlying the models. The impact of Islām created a new language, Urdu (from Persian: Camp), based on Hindi; Urdu was the lingua franca of the army. Urdu was used later for literature and at present is the mother tongue of most Indian Muslims and their brethren in Pakistan. Its influence, however, does not compare with that of Sanskrit.

Comparable to the impact of Sanskrit, but far more alien, is that of English, which began to assert itself in the 18th century. The language brought with it new literary forms that were gradually adapted to the old ones, producing new genres—without necessarily giving up the older ones—in the local languages and giving rise to an interesting literature in the English language. Once more, a universal cultural language to a large extent unified aims in the scattered languages; English still plays this role, though it appears to be slowly declining.

Sanskrit, Pāli, and Prākṛit literatures: 1400 BC–AD 1200

Sanskrit: formative period (1400–400 BC)

The oldest document in the literature of South Asia is the Rigveda, or Veda of the Stanzas (c. 1400 BC), the fundamental text of Brahminical Hinduism. Not literary but religious-magical in its purposes, it is mostly a compilation of hymns, dedicated to a number of gods of the Vedic religion. They have the regular structure of an invocation: the attention of the god is evoked; a brief account of some of his feats is given, to hold his attention; and an exhortation for his help concludes the hymn. The poets, of whom little is known, appear to have come at the close of a priestly poetical tradition, rivalling one another in allusions to obscure exploits, in language often opaque and at times intended to mystify. Nevertheless, the Rigvedic hymns include lines of great beauty. They may occur in a riddling verse, such as “When the ancient Dawns first dawned, the great Syllable was born in the footsteps of the Cow,” alluding to the birth of speech at the beginning of creation. Or they may occur in poetry addressed to a deity whose beauty inspires the poet to well-turned lines. To the Dawns, for example: “They approach equally in the east, spreading themselves equally from the same place./ The Goddesses waking from the seat of order, like herds of kine set loose, the Dawns are active”; or to the goddess of the night: “Night coming on, the goddess shines/

In many places with her eyes:/ All-glorious she has decked herself./ Immortal goddess, far and wide/ She fills the valleys and the heights:/ Darkness with light she overcomes.”

Nonsacred verses are very rare in the Rigveda, but, when they occur, they can be quite powerful, as in a hymn of a gambler, who is speaking:

It pains the gambler when he sees a woman,

Another’s wife, and their well-ordered household:

He yokes these brown steeds early in the morning,

And, when the fire is low, sinks down an outcast.

“Play not with dice, but cultivate thy cornfield;

Rejoice in thy goods, deeming them abundant:

There are thy cows, there is thy wife, O gambler.”

This counsel Savitri the kindly gives me.

Although not literary in purpose, the Rigveda had a decisive influence on the form of Sanskrit poetry: except for narrative verse, the basic unit of all subsequent poems (no matter how many verses they consist of) is the single stanza that contains one complete thought.

The second Veda (c. 1200 BC), the Yajurveda (Veda of the Yajus [Formulas]), contains sacred formulas recited by a group of priests at the great Vedic sacrifices; and the third (c. 1100 BC), the Sāmaveda (Veda of the Chants), is in essence an anthology of the Rigveda. More literary interest attaches to the fourth Veda (1200 BC), the Atharvaveda (an *atharvan* was a special priest), which contains hymns, incantations, and many magic charms.

The succeeding literature (c. 1000–700 BC), the *Brāhmaṇas* (“Disquisitions About the Ritual”), continues not the poetry but the liturgical concerns of the Rigveda. They were written in a dry, expository prose, so that only their narrative portions have any literary interest. Much the same is true of the next layer of Vedic texts (800–600 BC), the *Āraṇyakas* (“Books Studied in the Forest”). But the picture changes in the *Upaniṣads* (c. 1000–500 BC; “Collections of Esoteric Equations”). These prose texts at times convey the actual mode of teaching of a revered sage, in a style that can be strikingly intimate:

“Bring me a fruit of that *nyagrodha* (banyan) tree.”

“Here it is, venerable Sir.”

“Break it.”

“It is broken, venerable Sir.”

“What do you see there?”

“These seeds, exceedingly small, venerable Sir.”

“Break one of these, my son.”

“It is broken, venerable Sir.”

“What do you see there?”

“Nothing at all, venerable Sir.”

The father said: “That subtle essence, my dear, which you do not perceive there—from that very essence this great *nyagrodha* arises. Believe me, my dear.”

While the older *Upaniṣads* are in prose, the later ones, dating from around 500 BC, mark a shift back to verse. They are the oldest examples of didactic verse, a genre that later gained enormous popularity.

The contribution of late-Vedic texts to later literature is preeminently that of the development of an expository prose style and the evolution of a sacred language, which, in order to be effective, must be completely correct. Thus, the Vedic religion evolved a science of phonetics and, later, of grammar, which was summed up in the 5th or 6th century BC by the grammarian Pāṇini in *Aṣṭādhyāyī* (“Eight Chapters”), a book that was to become basic to Sanskrit education. This language, Sanskrit, remained the language *par excellence* for later literature and was used for literary purposes until the 13th century and, epigonically, until today.

Sanskrit: epic and didactic literature (400 BC–AD 1000)

After the formative period of the Vedic age, literature moved in several different directions. The close of the Vedic period was one of great cultural renewal, with the founding of the new monastic religions of Buddhism and Jainism (6th century BC) and the more slowly emerging rearticulation of Brahminism into Hinduism. Neither the earliest Buddhists nor the Jains availed themselves of Sanskrit in their preachings, apparently viewing the language as the preserve of a Brahmin elite. Sanskrit continued in derivative works of Vedic inspiration and above all in the *Mahābhārata* and the *Rāmāyaṇa*.

Mahābhārata

From references in Vedic literature it appears that side by side with the ritual texts there flourished a more secular literature carried on by bards. Originally charioteers to noblemen and thus witnesses of their feats, they chronicled the martial history of the families to which they were attached. From these beginnings, part chronicle, part panegyric, developed the epic style.

Like most Sanskrit poetry, the *Mahābhārata* consists of couplets, two successive lines with the same metre. Generally, one metre is used throughout the poem, though for stylistic effects other metres may be interspersed. The epic metre, or *śloka*, is a very fluid one that lends itself excellently to improvisation. The *Mahābhārata* is the longest poem in history, with about 100,000 couplets, more than seven times the size of Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey* combined. Its characters go back to around 1000 BC, but in its present form the epic could not have been composed before 400 BC. From that time until AD 400, it underwent continuous elaboration, by insertions of episodes (one of which is related in the religious poem called the *Bhagavadgītā*), accounts of separate adventures of the heroes, tales generated by their ancestors, and so on; and in the end it became a storehouse of general Hindu lore, with lengthy didactic books inserted.

The main narrative of the *Mahābhārata* recounts the growing up of two sets of cousins, both of whom aspire to a throne, the title to which is clouded. The protagonists, the Pāṇḍavas, stake their possessions in a dice game with the antagonists, the Kauravas, who are in effective control of the realm; they lose, and must live for 13 years in exile. This the five brothers do, along with the wife they hold in common. Upon their return from exile, they are refused their promised share of the kingdom, and, though parleys are held, war is inevitable. All of the Indian dynasties and tribes take sides in a war that lasts for 18 days, which only seven warriors, among them the Pāṇḍavas, survive. Noteworthy is the picture of gloom and doom that the *Mahābhārata* draws: there is little extolling of the heroic virtues of prowess and gallantry; rather, the wastefulness and bloodshed of war are pointed up, prefiguring a later concern with *ahimsā*, or nonviolence.

This summary does no justice to an extremely complex story with hundreds of participants, but it sketches the general outline of epic events. The main story has an unmistakable epic and heroic tone, and some of the events and encounters are completely comparable to those in epics of other peoples. But narrative and stylistic unity are disrupted by the inserted quasi-related and unrelated secondary episodes, each of which has a style of its own, ranging from light badinage to sonorous morality tales. It was in these episodes that the *Mahābhārata* lived on and greatly influenced succeeding literature; the story of Śakuntalā, for example, which the great 5th-century classical poet Kāṭīhāsa embroidered, the slaying of Śiśupāla, the battle of the hero Arjuna with the mountain man, the story of Nala, and so on. But the most celebrated episode surely is the *Bhagavadgītā*.

The influence of the *Bhagavadgītā* ("Song of the Lord") has mainly been on the development of Hindu religion and philosophy. Still, it is open to doubt whether it would have exerted this influence were it not for its poetry. Like most of the *Mahābhārata*, the style is simple and direct, not given to embellishment; nevertheless, the poem often reaches the height of expressiveness, as in its evocation of the theophany of Krishna as Vishnu, in the 11th of its 18 chapters. It led to imitations such as the *Īśvaragītā*, ("Song of the Lord [Śiva]"), also in the *Mahābhārata*, in which the god Śiva (Shiva) is celebrated.

Rāmāyaṇa

While the unity of the *Mahābhārata* has been disrupted by interpolations, the unity of the second epic, the *Rāmāyaṇa*, has been remarkably preserved. It is less an epic than a romance, recounting the story of prince Rāma and his wife Sītā. The first book, a later addition, tells of the youth of the prince, who later, by the trickery of one of his father's wives, is excluded from the throne to which he is heir. He goes into voluntary exile in the forests with his wife and his brother Lakṣmaṇa. There a demon, Rāvaṇa, abducts Sītā to his island kingdom of Laṅkā. In the course of his quest for her, Rāma allies himself with a monkey nation, whose general, Hanumān, later revered as a god, discovers Sītā on Laṅkā. A monumental battle ensues. "As the sky can only be likened to the ocean and the ocean to the sky, so the battle of Rāma and Rāvaṇa can only be likened to the battle of Rāvaṇa and Rāma." After his victory, Rāma is restored to the throne, but (in what appears to be a later addition) the populace accuses Sītā of misbehaviour, probable adultery, while in Laṅkā. Rāma thus abandons her to a hermitage (the sage of the hermitage, Vālmiki, is credited with the authorship of the *Rāmāyaṇa*), where she gives birth to their twin sons. Ultimately, Rāma takes Sītā and his sons back. In the later additions, the first and probably the last books, King Rāma is accepted as an incarnation of the god Vishnu, rather than merely a perfect man and hero.

It is the main story of the romance that has made an indelible impression on Indian culture, morally as well as literarily. Rāma is the perfect, just king; Sītā, the model of an Indian wife; Lakṣmaṇa (the brother), the paragon of fraternal love; and the monkey Hanumān, the epitome of a servitor's loyalty. It was translated into and adapted in many modern Indian languages, and (like parts of the *Mahābhārata*) it found its way into Java. Vālmiki himself was hailed by later classical poets as the first true poet (*kavi*), and indeed much of his work has a poetic freshness and literary intention that is largely absent from the *Mahābhārata*. Vālmiki's great tools are metaphor and simile, as is also true of later literature. He delights in description of pastoral scenes, in lamentations and grand martial spectacles, and in the idyll of the hermitage, which depicts a serene sage leading a life of quiet meditation and living on simple forest fare in a tranquil woodland close to a sacred river. And the entire work is suffused with a confident, unwavering morality, for which the heroes of the *Mahābhārata* are still searching.

Harivaṃśa and Purāṇas

The role of the *Mahābhārata* as the storehouse of Hindu lore was supplemented by the *Harivaṃśa* ("Genealogy of Hari"—that is, the god Vishnu), which deals with the ancestry and exploits of Krishna, the Pāṇḍavas' friend and adviser in the epic but now wholly deified and identified with the great god Vishnu. Then, from perhaps the 4th century, the literature of the *Purāṇas* took over. Encyclopaedic works, often of considerable length, the *Purāṇas* deal with the mythology of time and space and of deities, with sagas of great heroic dynasties, and with legends of saints and ascetics; their interest is largely religious. Aesthetically, the

most important of them is the *Bhāgavata-Purāṇa* (9th or 10th century), which celebrates the blessed lord (*bhagavat*) Vishnu in his many theophanies but is particularly evocative in its celebration of Vishnu's incarnation as Krishna and the playful story of his youth. The influence of the *Bhāgavata-Purāṇa*, particularly the 10th book, on Indian religion, art, and literature has been monumental. In the opinion of one scholar, this book constitutes the greatest poem ever written; and so it is in the popular estimation of the Hindus. It was adapted in many Indian languages and provided themes and scenes for the flourishing miniature styles of the Middle Ages.

Pāli and Prākṛit literature (c. 200 BC–AD 200)

No more than the Vedic literature do the literatures of early Buddhism and Jainism have a literary intention. Their texts, written in dialects other than Sanskrit, articulate the teachings of the religious founders and their successors. Because they were transmitted orally for a considerable time before they were written down in the form they would retain, they underwent the inevitable censorship of the centuries, both negative in the form of documents dropped out of use and positive in the form of newer documents added. The dates given here are only approximations of the time of the documentary fixation of the dates.

Buddhist texts

The earliest records of Buddhism are not textual but inscriptional, in the famous edicts of the Mauryan emperor Aśoka, who reigned c. 269–232 BC. Among these inscriptions on stone, the so-called 13th rock edict—in which Aśoka, after the massacre of the Kalingas (modern Orissa), abjures war—is the most moving document of any dynastic history. The inscriptions were written in a variety of Prākṛits; that is, Indo-Aryan languages closely cognate to, but considerably later than, the earliest stabilized Sanskrit.

The vehicle of the extant textual literature is the Pāli language, which is held to be a western Indian dialect on a substratum of several central and eastern ones. It was the language in use by the Theravāda school of Buddhism; but, since that school became the dominant one among many in early Buddhism, the Pāli language is often identified with the Buddha's own speech. Most of the canonical literature is exclusively of religious interest, but interspersed in it are works of considerable literary interest.

Foremost perhaps are discourses put into the Buddha's mouth—for example, his sermon “In the Deer Park”—and no doubt deriving from fairly accurate memories. With their straightforward, lively, and incisive style, homely similes, and simple humour, they are excellent examples of the homiletics of early Buddhist preaching. Incorporated in the canon, too, are more general works of literature. The *Dhammapada* (“Verses on the Buddhist Doctrine”) is a fine example of the moralistic, aphoristic strain in Indian literature, in which virtue is extolled and vice condemned. It has remained a work of considerable diffusion in

all Buddhist countries, and, as in the case of the *Bhagavadgītā* in Hinduism, much of its popularity is due to its literary style. The *Suttanipāta* collection of the Buddhist canon, composed in a more formal style, contains 55 narrative and didactic poems, in the form of dialogues and ballads; they are composed in a metre akin to the Sanskrit *śloka*. Of great interest are the *Theragāthā* and the *Therīgāthā* (“Hymns of the Senior Monks” and “Hymns of the Senior Nuns”), which give at times a vivid insight into the ambience in which a conversion to Buddhism took place: a monk celebrates his newfound freedom in an idyll of the hermit’s life; and a nun reminisces over the pains of deserting her home and child, yet without regrets, since she has won the freedom of Buddhism. The prosodic variety of Buddhist lyrics is great; about 30 different metres can be distinguished. Pāli poems, with their new metres (often based on a musical phrase), stylistic features, figures of speech, and choice diction, foreshadow classical *kāvya* literature in Sanskrit, whose extant specimens date from a later period.

Of great importance is a huge volume called *Jātakas* (“Birth Stories”), recounting some 500 episodes supposedly having occurred in the Buddha’s earlier lives. Only those parts in archaic verse are canonical; the prose portion was written later (c. 3rd century AD), probably in Ceylon. The *Jātakas* consist of fairy tales, animal stories and fables (the future Buddha may be incarnate in an animal), ballads, and anecdotes. Though their setting is often imaginary, they provide significant material for the historian of society and culture. These mostly short tales abound in moving, delicate, often rustic touches that have made them the delight of the Buddhist world. Their themes are illustrated in bas-reliefs of Buddhist shrines (or *stūpas*) at Bhārhut and Sānchi and monumentally on the great *stūpa* of Java, the Borobudur.

Of considerable literary as well as historical interest is the Pāli text *Milinda-pañha* (“The Questions of Milinda”). Milinda is identical to the Greek Menander, the name of a Bactrian Indo-Greek king (c. 140–110 BC) who was skeptical of the verities of Buddhism and was enlightened by the teaching of an elder, Nāgasena. The extensive Buddhist erudition that the sage displays is artfully presented in the form of simile and parable, and the work has contributed importantly to the edification of audiences in the countries where Buddhism came to be established. The style, in spite of the repetitions so typical of Buddhist doctrinal texts, is lively and presents the reader with an invaluable picture of contemporary Indian life.

Jaina texts

Less interest attaches to Jaina canonical works, which were written in an adapted and stabilized literary dialect called Ardhamāgadhī (Semi-Māgadhī, Māgadhī being the dialect of the ancient kingdom of Magadha, in present day Bihār). The belletristic contribution of Jaina literature is discussed below.

Classical Sanskrit *kāvya* (200–1200)

Prepared for by the systematization of the Sanskrit language by Pāṇini, the development of the great epics, notably the *Rāmāyaṇa*, and the refinements of prosody represented by the Pāli lyrics, there arose, in the first centuries AD, a Sanskrit literary style that governed canons of taste for a millennium and remained influential far later through modern Indian languages and their literatures. The style, called *kāvya*, is characterized by an extremely self-conscious effort on the part of the writer to compose poetry pleasing to both the ear and the mind. It evolved an elaborate poetics of figures of speech, among which the metaphor and simile, in their many manifestations, predominate; a careful use of language, governed by the stated norms of grammar; an ever-increasing tendency to use compound nouns instead of drawing on the quite plentiful possibilities of Sanskrit inflection; a sometimes ostentatious display of erudition in the arts and sciences; an adroitness in the use of varied and complicated, if appropriate, metres—all applied to traditional themes such as the epic had provided and to the rendering of emotions, most often the love between men and women.

The style finds its classical expression in the so-called *mahākāvya* (“great poem”), most akin to the epyllion (“miniature epic”) art form of the Alexandrian poets (a school of Greek poets, c. 3rd–1st centuries BC); the strophic lyric (a lyric based on a rhythmic system of two or more lines repeated as a unit); and the Sanskrit theatre. It can also be extended to narrative literature, especially the prose novel. The great masters in the *Kāvya* form (which was also exported to Java) were Aśvaghoṣa, Kālidāsa, Bāṇa, Daṇḍin, Māgha, Bhavabhūti, and Bhāravi.

The earliest surviving *kāvya* literature was written by a Buddhist, Aśvaghoṣa, said to have been a contemporary of the Kuṣāṇa (Kushān) king Kaniṣka (1st century AD). Aśvaghoṣa’s work also marks a shift away from the Pāli of the Theravāda branch of Buddhism back to the more and more accepted Sanskrit of the Mahāyāna branch. Two works are extant, both in the style of *mahākāvya*: the *Buddhacarita* (“Life of the Buddha”) and the *Saundarānanda* (“Of Sundarī and Nanda”). Compared with later examples, they are fairly simple in style but reveal typical propensities of writers in this genre: a great predilection for descriptions of nature scenes, for grand spectacles, amorous episodes, and aphoristic observations. The resources of the Sanskrit language are fully exploited; stylistic embellishments (*alaṅkāra*) of simile and metaphor, alliteration, assonance, and the like are employed, often quite felicitously. The original *Buddhacarita*, rediscovered in 1892, had been known from Tibetan and Chinese translations. The Sanskrit text is fragmentary, breaking off in the 14th canto (major division of the poem) with the enlightenment of the Buddha, while the other versions take the story through the Buddha’s Nirvāṇa. Though intended to instruct the reader to turn away from the sensuous life and follow the Buddha’s path, the work is at its best in descriptions of that very life. This is even more apparent in the *Saundarānanda*, which recounts a well-known story of how the Buddha converted his half-brother Nanda, who was deeply in love with his wife, Sundarī, and with the good life, to the monastic life of austerity. In his mastery of the intricacies of prosody and the subtleties of grammar and vocabulary, Aśvaghoṣa shows himself the complete forerunner of the Hindu *mahākāvya* authors.

The mahākāvya

In its classical form, a *mahākāvya* consists of a variable number of comparatively short cantos, each composed in a metre appropriate to its particular subject matter. The subject matter of the *mahākāvya* itself is taken from the epic, which is not, however, followed slavishly. Most *mahākāvyas* display such set pieces as descriptions of cities, oceans, mountains, the seasons, the rising of the sun and moon, games, festivals, weddings, embassies, councils, war, and triumph. It is typical of the genre that, while each strophe, or stanza, is intended to be part of a narrative sequence, it more often stands by itself, a discrete unit conveying one idea or developing one image. In this, the tendency of the Rigvedic stanza (see above Sanskrit: formative period [1200–400 BC]) continues in the classical literature. Although the lines of the classical stanza are long enough to convey their meaning quite explicitly, it is the pride of the poet to suggest rather than to express. Sometimes this is done by simple collocation of words: for example, in the first line of Kālidāsa's *Meghadūta* a *yakṣa* (a mischievous elf-like creature) is afflicted by a curse, “the more painful because it spelt separation from his beloved”; the next word notes that he had been negligent in his duties; taken together, the two words, though syntactically unrelated, suggest that it was his amour that made him neglect his duties. Another common suggestive device is the double meaning, or play on words. These double meanings often add a certain graceful playfulness to the poetry, reminding one that the poem was written first of all to give pleasure to the man of taste.

Traditionally there are six model *mahākāvyas*, three by Kālidāsa and one each by Bhāravi, Māgha, and Śriharṣa, to which sometimes the *Bhaṭṭikākya* is added.

Nothing is known with certainty of the life of Kālidāsa, the greatest of Sanskrit poets, but there is substantial agreement that at one time he lived in Ujjayinī (Ujjain, in the present state of Madhya Pradesh), the capital of Avanti and an important centre of Sanskrit culture in a commercially busy area. His name, which means Servitor of Kālī, indicates that he was a follower of that goddess, whom he was to celebrate as Pārvatī, the daughter of the mountain, in the *Kumārasambhava*. Probably he lived during the reign of Chandra Gupta II Vikramāditya (c. 380–c. 415), and there are reports that he died, by the hand of an envious courtesan, while a guest of King Kumāradāsa of Ceylon.

Compared with those of others, Kālidāsa's style might be called simple, but it is a very studied, very felicitous simplicity, hiding the actual complexity of his constructions. In two of his *mahākāvyas*, Kālidāsa draws on epic lore. The first, and probably earlier one, is the *Kumārasambhava* (“Birth of the War God”), which describes the courting of the ascetic Śiva, who is meditating in the mountains, by Pārvatī, the daughter of the Himalayas; the destruction of the god of love (after his arrow has struck Śiva) by the fire from Śiva's third eye; and the wedding and lovemaking of Śiva and Pārvatī, which results in the conception of the war god. The original is in eight cantos, but a sequel was added by an imitator. The second *mahākāvya*, the *Raghuvamśa* (“Dynasty of Raghu”), deals with themes from the

Rāmāyaṇa: it describes the vicissitudes of the Solar dynasty of the ancient Indian barons, culminating in the *Rāmāyaṇa* story of Rāma and Sītā. The *Raghuvamśa* is famous for its beautiful descriptions and incidental narratives, which give the poem a somewhat episodic character; among them are a description of the six seasons (spring, summer, rainy, autumn, winter, and dewy) and the story of a young hermit who went to the river to fill a water jar for his parents and was killed by a stray arrow.

Unique in Sanskrit love poetry is Kālidāsa's *Meghadūta*, in which the poet tries to go beyond the strophic unity of the short lyric (see below The short lyric), which normally characterizes love poems, by stringing the stanzas into a narrative. This innovation did not take hold, though the poem inspired imitations along precisely the same story line. The *Meghadūta* is the lament of an exiled *yakṣa* who is pining for his beloved on a lonely mountain peak. When, at the beginning of the monsoon, a cloud perches on the peak, he asks it to deliver a message to his love in the Himalayan city of Alakā. Most of the poem, composed in an extremely graceful metre, consists of a description of the landmarks, cities, and the like on the cloud's route to Alakā. It must be considered among the finest poems, if not the finest poem, written in Sanskrit. Kālidāsa also wrote for the theatre (see below The theatre) and was no doubt the most versatile author of Sanskrit literature; his works became well-nigh canonical models.

Bhāravi (6th century) probably hailed from the south during the reign of the Pallava dynasty. He took up a *Mahābhārata* theme in his *Kirātārjunīya* ("Arjuna and the Mountain Man"), recounting the Pāṇḍava prince Arjuna's encounter and ensuing combat with a wild mountaineer who in the end proves to be the god Śiva. Bhāravi's language and style are more difficult than Kālidāsa's, but the poem is highly regarded in Indian literary tradition.

Māgha, who wrote in the 8th century, was a conscious rival of Bhāravi, whom he attempted to surpass in every respect. His *Śiśupālavadha* ("The Slaying of King Śiśupāla") is based on an episode of the *Mahābhārata* in which the rival King Śiśupāla insults the hero-god Krishna, who beheads him in the ensuing duel. Māgha is a master of technique in the strict Sanskrit sense of luscious descriptions; intricate syntax; compounds that, depending on how they are split, deliver quite different meanings; and the full register of stylistic embellishments.

To some critics, the preoccupation with technique, the triumph of form over substance, appears to have spelled the doom of the *mahākāvya*. A curious but entirely Sanskritic phenomenon, for example, is the *Bhaṭṭikāvya*, a poem by Bhaṭṭi (probably 6th or 7th century). It again deals with the story of Rāma and Sītā, but at the same time it illustrates in stanza after stanza, in exactly the proper sequence, the principal rules of Sanskrit grammar and poetics. Less artificial is the *Naiṣadhacarita* ("The Life of Nala, King of Niṣadha"), written by the 12th-century poet Śrīharṣa and based on the story of Nala and Damayantī in the *Mahābhārata*. An example of another kind of excess indulged in by *mahākāvya* writers is the *Rāmacarita* ("Deeds of Rāma"), by the 12th-century poet Sandhyākāra, which celebrates simultaneously the hero-god Rāma and the poet's own king, Rāmapāla of Bengal. Many other

works were written in this style, and, even today, one may encounter a *mahākāvya* treatment of a great man such as Mahatma Gandhi or Jawaharlal Nehru.

Difficult to classify is the work of the 12th-century Bengal poet Jayadeva, who wrote the *Gītagovinda* (“Cowherd Song”). The basic structure of this long poem, in which the poet recounts the youthful loves of the cowherd hero and god Krishna, largely based on the story of the *Bhāgavata-Purāṇa*, is that of the *mahākāvya*. Generously interspersed between cantos, however, are erotic-religious lyrics of extremely musical assonances, which were, and still are, sung. Jayadeva’s work, rather lacking in the grammatical rigidity of the other *mahākāvya* writers, has been extremely popular and affords a fine example of the devotional lyric (see the section below, and see also Bengali).

The short lyric

It is in the short, one-stanza lyric that Sanskrit poetry is revealed most intimately in its real aims. As noted, almost all of high Sanskrit poetry is strophic in fact; in the lyric it is so in intention. It is eminently a genre of the poetic moment, making an aesthetic observation and placing it within the Sanskritic universe of discourse. It may be an observation of anything: a fish glintingly jumping from a pond, aboriginal tribesmen engaged in a bloody rite, love in all its manifestations, a glimpse of God perceived or remembered. But in the monumental lyric collections that have been preserved, and in the many stray verses still circulating among educated Hindus in India as so-called *subhāṣitas* (“well-turned” couplets), the more common topics are praise of the god of one’s devotion and the vagaries of love.

In the short lyric it is hard to make a distinction that depends on the language in which it is composed; for, although the language may be different, the subject matter and forms are the same. Many love lyrics, especially when they describe feelings experienced by women, are composed not in Sanskrit but, instead, in one of the *Prākritis*, or Middle Indo-Aryan languages, among which the dialect called *Māhārāṣṭrī* is particularly popular. The collection of 700 poems in this language, compiled by Hāla under the name of *Sattasāi* (“The Seven Hundred”), tends to be simpler in imagery and in the emotion portrayed than their Sanskrit counterparts, but essential differences are difficult to pinpoint.

The devotional lyric, a short verse expressing the author’s devotion to a god, is linked with both the hymnal poetry of the *Rigveda*—though far less determined by a desire for compelling magic—and the temple worship of Hinduism. Though by no means always, there is often a particularism about them: the deity is invoked as it appears in a specific iconic stance or in a local temple or in a manifestation especially pleasing to the poet. The number of such verses is countless; every major religious and philosophic leader is held to have added to their stock. Some are especially famous: the *Sūryāṣṭaka* (“Eight Strophes for the Sun”), by Mayūra; the collections attributed to the philosopher Śaṅkara, the *Saundaryalaharī* (“The Wavy River of the Beautiful Sky”); and the *Kṛṣṇakarmṇāmṛta* (“The Elixir of Hearing of Krishna”), by Bilvamaṅgala, among others. These *stotra* (“lyrics of praise”) quite often were

set to music, and people continue to sing them today—without necessarily comprehending the full intention of the Sanskrit, much as hymns in Latin were traditionally sung by Roman Catholic believers.

The entire erotic experience, from budding love to the aftermath of consummation, is represented brilliantly in lyric poetry. But among the many themes inspired by love, poets have been most attracted to the lament of separated lovers. It is mostly the sufferings of the woman that are portrayed, but the grief of the man is also depicted—in Kālidāsa's *Meghadūta*, for example. The love lyrics consist of single verses, many of which seek to suggest the mood of *śṛṅgāra* (physical love). While often extremely erotic, they are very rarely obscene. Sanskrit norm banned all coarse expressions for sexual play; and, although much probably escapes the modern reader, blunt allusions to genital organs are rare and, where allusions occur, extremely veiled. Bodily parts with less overt sexual connotations, such as breasts and buttocks, are frankly mentioned and described—in fact, celebrated. In allusions to sexual intercourse the terminology of the *Kāmasūtra* of Vātsyāyana is frequently invoked, as though this ancient textbook of Indian erudition was a protection against possible opprobrium—not unlike Latin terms resorted to in the West for actions that most know by shorter, more colloquial names.

The erotic and the devotional lyric merge freely, and at times it is impossible to make out whether the free sexual imagery employed is to be taken literally or as an allegory of the human soul courting the love of its god. The task—not a very pressing one—is made more difficult by the fact that some *bhakti* (devotion) religions have developed the poetics of love poetry into a kind of theology, a phenomenon quite characteristic of Bengal Krishnaism (see below Indo-Aryan literatures: 12th–18th century).

Authors of *subhāṣitas* often collected them themselves, the favourite form being that of the *śataka* (“century” of verses), in which 100 short lyrics on a common theme were strung together. Mention has been made of Hāla's *Sattasāi* (“The Seven Hundred,” consisting of lyrics in the Māhārāṣṭrī dialect). Four well-known Sanskrit collections, of the 7th century, are the famous “century” of Amaru, king of Kashmir, and the three “centuries” by the poet Bhartrhari; one of the latter's collections is devoted to love, another to worldly wisdom—a very popular theme in epigrammatic verse—and the third to dispassion. Of the same type but in a different vein is *Caurapañcāśikā* (“Fifty Poems on Secret Love”), in which the 12th-century poet Bilhaṇa fondly recalls the pleasure of his clandestine amours with a local princess.

The theatre

Of all the literary arts, the Indians esteemed the play most highly, and it is in this form that most of the other arts were wedded together. Its origins are obscure, but there is reason to assume that the play developed out of recitations of well-known epic stories by professional reciters. It is an extremely rich genre with a number of outstanding playwrights.

The style is extremely varied. Although it might be called a Sanskrit play, Sanskrit is by no means the only language used, for the less educated characters, including all women, speak Prākṛits of different degrees of niceness. The action is carried by prose, but at the least provocation—indeed, at any of the poetic moments characteristic of the strophic lyric—the author reverts to verse, sometimes in mid-sentence. Two principal types of play are distinguished: the *nāṭaka*, which is based on epic material, and the *prakaraṇa*, which is of the author's invention, though often borrowed from narrative literature.

Characteristic of the Sanskrit theatre are elements of sacrality. The play begins and ends with a benediction, many of which consist of subject matter taken from sacred texts. It is also expressed in numerous taboos: the play must have a happy outcome in which harmony, interrupted by the drama of the play, is restored; improper scenes, such as eating, dressing and undressing, and sexual intercourse, are not to be portrayed; no violence among the higher characters is permitted; war, which often occurs, should simply be reported on, often by lower characters, not in any way staged.

Fragments of Buddhist plays prior to the flowering of Hindu theatre have survived, but no complete plays earlier than 13 ascribed to the playwright Bhāsa. There is considerable controversy over the authenticity of the Bhāsa plays, but at least some of them must be authentic, perhaps dating back to the 3rd century. The plays are based on the epic and on the *Bṛhat-kathā* narrative cycle (see below); among the latter, the *Svapnavāsavadattā* ("The Dream of Vāsavadattā") is the most famous. Of considerable interest also is the *Daridra-Cārudatta* ("The Poverty of Cārudatta"), which became the basis for the play *Mṛcchakaṭika* ("Little Clay Cart") of Śūdraka (see below).

It must be assumed that there was an efflorescence of poetry and theatre in the city of Ujjayinī, one of the capitals of the Gupta Empire, in the 5th century, for a number of authors can be placed there during this reign; among these were Viśākhadatta, Śūhraka, Śyāmilaka, the writer of one of the best farces, and Kālidāsa, who at the beginning of the development of the genre produced some of the greatest plays in the tradition.

Three plays by Kālidāsa remain, one of which is the *Mālavikāgnimitra* ("Agnimitra and Mālavikā"), a harem play of amorous intrigue at a royal court. The other two are based on old themes. *Vikramorvaśī* ("Urvaśī Won by Valour") is based on a story as old as the Rīgveda, that of the nymph Urvaśī, who is loved by King Purūravas, whom she marries on the condition that she shall never see him nude. The accident happens, and the nymph returns to heaven, leaving her husband crazed with longing, until a final reunion. But the Indian tradition holds the *Abhijñānaśakuntalā* ("Śakuntalā and the Token of Recognition") to be the greatest of all Sanskrit plays. It recounts a *Mahābhārata* story—rather freely to be sure—of a hermit girl secretly married to a visiting king, who leaves with her a keepsake that will serve her as a token of recognition. She gives birth to a son, Bharata, and goes to the King's court; on the way she loses the ring in a river, where a fish swallows it. The King fails to recognize her and rejects her, and her mother, a nymph, carries her to heaven. When the ring is

recovered by a fisherman and the King's memory is restored, he searches for Śakuntalā but does not find her. In the end he meets a boy who proves to be his son and is restored to him.

Kālidāsa's great forte is the portrayal of emotions—ordinary enough in themselves (budding love, love consummated, rejection, despair, a father's love for his son)—but Kālidāsa applies to them a mastery of expression and image that makes the play a work of perennial beauty.

Next to nothing is known of Śūdraka except that he must have hailed from Ujjayinī. His is the most charming of all *prakaraṇa* plays (those that are not based on epic material): the *Mṛcchakaṭikā* ("Little Clay Cart"), the story of an impoverished merchant and a courtesan who love each other but are thwarted by a powerful rival who tries to kill the woman and place the blame on the hero, Cārudatta. The play offers a fascinating view of the different layers of urban society. Viśākhadatta, the author of a rare semi-historical play called *Mudrārākṣasa* ("Minister Rākṣasa and his Signet Ring"), apparently was a courtier at the Gupta court. His play is a dramatization of the Machiavellian political principles expounded in the book *Artha-śāstra*, by Kauṭilya, who appears as the hero of the play.

To the 7th-century king Harṣa of Kanauj are attributed three charming plays: *Ratnāvalī* and *Priyadarśikā*, both of which are of the harem type; and *Nāgānanda* ("The Joy of the Serpents"), inspired by Buddhism and illustrating the generosity of the snake deity Jīmūtavāhana.

Ranked by Indian tradition close to Kālidāsa himself, Bhavabhūti (early 8th century) was the author of three plays, two of which are based on the *Rāmāyaṇa* story. The *Mahāvīracarita* ("The Exploits of the Great Hero") treats of Rāma's battle with Rāvaṇa and the *Uttararāmacarita* ("The Later Deeds of Rāma") treats of the life of Rāma after he has abandoned Sītā. Bhavabhūti lacks the elegance and grace of Kālidāsa but is more pensive—even brooding—than his predecessor. His style is also very forceful. His *prakaraṇa Mālatī-Mādhava* ("Mālatī and Mādhava") is a complex love intrigue intermingled with sorcery and Tantric practices, including a human sacrifice and much violence.

This list by no means concludes that of the playwrights in the Sanskrit tradition. The writing of plays, mostly derivative from the great models, has continued until the present day.

Apart from the more seriously intended plays described above, the Sanskrit theatre also has a rich repertory of farces, which are usually in one act. Most interesting of these are the *bhāṇas*, which may be monologues in which an actor addresses imaginary persons and is answered by them, as he paints a picture of town life full of personal and social satire. Among the best in this little-studied genre is Śyāmilaka's 5th-century *Pādataḍitaka* ("The Courtesan's Kick").

Narrative literature

Sanskrit narrative literature is extremely rich, so rich in fact that at one time it was believed that all folktales originally came from India. Many indeed have, and they have found a place in *The Arabian Nights' Entertainment*, Boccaccio's *Decameron*, and other such works down to the fairy tales of Hans Christian Andersen and the fables of Jean de La Fontaine. Certain collections of animal tales, some of which go back to the Buddhist *Jātaka* stories, had incredible histories. The most famous is the *Pañca-tantra* ("The Five Chapters"), which, within a framework of a lesson in the art of politics addressed to young princes, presents a number of animal characters who in their actions both admonish and exhort the reader to a life certain to lead to worldly success. A shorter version, partly drawn from the *Pañca-tantra*, is the *Hitopadeśa* ("Good Advice"). The *Pañca-tantra* found its way to the West through translations into Persian, Arabic, Syrian, Hebrew, and Latin, until most of the medieval literatures possessed their own versions of it. No less extensive were its migrations to Southeast and East Asia.

The principal work of the novelistic and picaresque tale is the *Bṛhat-kathā* ("Great Story") of Guṇāḍhya, written in Prākṛit and now lost, save for Sanskrit retellings. The most important among these Sanskrit versions is the *Kathā-saritsāgara* ("Ocean of Rivers of Stories") of Somadeva (11th century), which includes so many subsidiary tales that the main story line is frequently lost. Perhaps more faithful to the original—in any case far less distracting—is the *Bṛhatkathāślokaśaṃgraha* ("Summary in Verse of the Great Story"), by Budhasvāmin (probably 7th century), one of the most charming of Sanskrit texts. Other collections of tales include the *Vetāla-pañcaviṃśatikā* ("Twenty-five Tales of a Ghost"), *Śūkasaptati* ("The Seventy Stories of a Parrot"), and the *Siṃhāsana-dvātrim-sātikā* ("Thirty-two Stories of a Royal Throne").

Related to the *Bṛhat-kathā* cycle, though the exact relationship is unclear, is the Jain Prākṛit text of the *Vāsudevahiṇḍī*, "The Roamings of Vāsudeva" (before 6th century), describing the acquisition of numerous wives by Krishna Vāsudeva.

Though the tales are often artless, sometimes they are elaborately embroidered in the Sanskrit *kāvya* style. A fine example is the *Daśakumāracarita* ("Tales of Ten Princes"), by Daṇḍin (6th/7th century), in which, within the framework of a boxing story, the picaresque adventures of 10 disinherited princes are described in prose. While tending overly to description, the work remains eminently readable for the modern reader, a quality that cannot be attributed to the prose novels of the 7th-century writer Bāṇa: the *Harṣacarita*, "The Life of Harṣa" (king of Kanauj and the author of three plays, discussed above in The theatre), which is important for its information on culture and society; and the *Kādambarī* (the name of the heroine), which describes the affairs of two sets of lovers through a series of incarnations, in which they are constantly harassed by a cruel fate.

J.A.B. van Buitenen

Dravidian literature: 1st–19th century

Of the four literary Dravidian languages, Tamil has been recorded earliest, followed by Kannada, Telugu, and Malayalam. Tamil literature has a classical tradition of its own, while the literatures of the other languages have been influenced by Sanskrit models.

Early Tamil literature (1st–10th century)

Śaṅgam literature

Early classical Tamil literature is represented by eight anthologies of lyrics, 10 long poems, and a grammar called the *Tolkāppiyam* (“Old Composition”). According to a fanciful Tamil tradition, this literature was produced by poets of three “academies,” or *śaṅgams*, that in the hoary past were centred in the southern Indian city of Madurai and supposedly lasted 4,400, 3,700, and 1,850 years, respectively. The *Tolkāppiyam* was ascribed to the second *śaṅgam*, the eight anthologies and 10 long poems to the third; according to tradition, nothing is extant from the first *śaṅgam*. The early literature, itself known as Śaṅgam, comprises 2,381 poems, ranging from four to nearly 800 lines each and assigned to 473 poets who are known by name or epithet; about 100 poems are anonymous. Though the literature does not go back as far as native tradition would have it, it is generally ascribed to the first three centuries of the Christian Era and represents the oldest non-Sanskrit literature to be found on the South Asian subcontinent.

The eight anthologies and their contents, excluding opening invocations that were added later, are as follows: *akam* anthologies consisting of (1) *Kuṟuntokai*, 400 love poems, (2) *Narṟinai*, 400 love poems, (3) *Akanāṇūru*, 400 love poems, (4) *Aiṅkuṟunūru*, 500 love poems, each 100 (assigned to a different poet) dealing with one of five phases of love, (5) *Kalittokai*, 150 love poems in a metre called *kali*; and *puram* anthologies consisting of (6) *Puraṇāṇūru*, 400 poems, (7) *Paṭiṟruppattu* (“The Ten Tens”), 100 poems on kings (the first and last decades are missing), and (8) *Paripāṭal*, a collection of 70 religious poems. *Paripāṭal* and *Kalittokai* appear to be the latest of the anthologies; *Kuṟuntokai* and *Puraṇāṇūru* probably contain the earliest compositions. The remarkable work of grammar and rhetoric, *Tolkāppiyam*, is the crucial text for an understanding of early Tamil language and literature. Divided into three sections (each consisting of *cūttirams*, or aphorisms)—sounds, words, and meaning—the *Tolkāppiyam* details, in the third, the canons of Śaṅgam poetic traditions.

In the *Tolkāppiyam* and the anthologies, poems are classified by theme into *akam* (“interior”) and *puram* (“exterior”), the former highly structured love poems, the latter heroic poems on war, death, personal virtues, the ferocity and glory of kings, and the poverty of poets. Both the *akam* and the *puram* had well-defined *tiṇais* (genres) that paralleled one another: e.g., the *kuṟiṇci* genre, in love poetry, which dealt with the lovers’ clandestine union on a hillside by night; and the *veṭci* genre, in heroic poetry, which dealt with the first onset of war, by nocturnal cattle stealing. Both *kuṟiṇci* and *veṭci* are names of flowers that grow on the hillside, here symbolic of the poetic genre, the mood, and the theme. By such pairings across *akam* and *puram*, love and war become part of the same universe and metaphors for one

another; the same poets—for example, Paraṇar and Kapilar—wrote great poems in both genres. The basic technique depended on a taxonomy of Tamil nature and culture, of culturally defined time, space, nature, and human nature. For example, matched in metaphor with five phases of *akam* love (union; infidelity; anxious waiting; patient waiting; and the lover or lovers eloping or journeying for wealth, knowledge, and so on) are six seasons, six parts (dawn, forenoon, noon, afternoon, evening, and night) of the day, and five landscapes (hill, seashore, forest, pasture, and wasteland, named after characteristic flowers—*kuriñci*, *neytal*, *mullai*, and *marutam*—and the evergreen tree, *pālai*) and their contents (including gods, foods, birds, beasts, drums, occupations, lutes, musical styles, flowers, and kinds of running or standing water). Each landscape becomes a repertoire of images—anything in it, bird or drum, tribal name or dance, may evoke a specific feeling. A favourite poetic device is *uḷḷurai* (i.e., metonymy, a figure of speech consisting of the description of one thing used to evoke that of another with which it is associated). Thus, the natural scene implicitly evokes the human scene; for example, bees making honey out of *kuriñci* flowers evokes the lovers' union. Not only is the poet's language Tamil, but the landscapes, the personae, and the appropriate moods and situations formulate the realities of the Tamil world into a code of symbols. For some five or six generations, the Śaṅgam poets spoke this common language of symbols, creating a body of lyrical poetry probably unequalled in passion, maturity, and delicacy by anything in any Indian literature.

Eighteen Ethical Works

The Patireṇ-kīrkkaṇakku ("Eighteen Ethical Works"), usually dated as post-Śaṅgam (4th–7th centuries), are all affected by Jainism and Buddhism. Of these the *Tirukkuraḷ* ("Sacred Couplets"), ascribed to Tiruvalluvar, is the most celebrated. Its 1,330 hemistichs (half lines of verse) are probably the final distillation of different periods. There are many parallels in the work to the Sanskrit *Kāma-sūtra*, the treatise on erotic love, to *Manu-smṛti*, an ancient treatise on special obligation and religious law, and to *Artha-śāstra*, Kauṭilya's treatise on politics. The *Kuraḷ* has three sections: *aṛam*, or virtue (Sanskrit *dharma*); *poruḷ*, government and society (Sanskrit *artha*); and *kāmam*, love (Sanskrit *kāma*). There is no special treatment of *mokṣa*, or salvation, though *aṛam* seems to include it. In the *aṛam* (virtue) section, the *Kuraḷ* sums up a world-affirming wisdom, the wisdom of human sympathy, expanding from wife, children, and friends to clan, village, and country. In the *poruḷ* (government and society) section, the aphorisms project a vision of an ideal state, based on educated human nature, and relate the good citizen to the good man. Prostitution, disease, drink, and gambling are listed, with foreign enemies, as dangers to the state. In the *kāmam* (love) section, the *Kuraḷ* follows the śaṅgam's love—eros, or sexual love—yet anticipates agape, the perfecting of love through many lives, which appears in religious poetry of the next age.

Epics

The age of the Pallavas (300?–900), a warrior dynasty of Hindu kings, is known for its epics, beginning with *Cilappatikāram* (“The Jewelled Anklet”) and *Maṇimēkalai* (“The Girdle of Gems”) and including an incomplete narrative, *Peruṅkatai* (“The Great Story”), the *Cīvakacintāmaṇi* (“The Amulet of Cīvakaṇ”) by Tiruttakkatēvar, and *Cūḷāmaṇi* (“The Crest Jewel”) by Tōlāmolittēvar. The last three works depict Jaina kings and their ideals of the good life, nonviolence, and the attainment of salvation through self-sacrifice. They are also characterized by excellent descriptions of city and country and by a mixture of supernatural and natural elements. In their episodic methods of narration and set descriptions of erotic, heroic, and religious themes, these Jaina epics became both models and sources for later epic works.

The *Cilappatikāram*, by Iḷaṅkō Aṭikaḷ, is in three books, set in the capitals of the three Tamil kingdoms: Pukār (the Cōḷa capital), Maturai (*i.e.*, Madurai, the Pāṇṭiya [Pāṇḍya] capital), and Vañci (the Cēra capital). The story is not about kings but about Kōvalaṇ, a young Pukār merchant, telling of his marriage to the virtuous Kaṇṇaki, his love for the courtesan Mātavi, and his consequent ruin and exile in Maturai, where he dies, unjustly executed when he tries to sell his wife’s anklet to a wicked goldsmith who had stolen the Queen’s similar anklet and charged Kōvalaṇ with the theft. Kaṇṇaki, the widow, comes running to the city and shows the King her other anklet, breaks it to prove it is not the Queen’s—Kaṇṇaki’s contains rubies, and the Queen’s contains pearls—and thus proves Kōvalaṇ’s innocence. Kaṇṇaki tears off one breast and throws it at the kingdom of Maturai, which goes up in flames. Such is the power of a faithful wife. The third book deals with the Cēra king’s victorious expedition to the north to bring Himalayan stone for an image of Kaṇṇaki, now become a goddess of chastity (*pattiṇi*).

The *Cilappatikāram* is a fine synthesis of mood poetry in the ancient Tamil Śaṅgam tradition and the rhetoric of Sanskrit poetry—even the title is a blend of Tamil and Sanskrit—including in the epic frame *akam* lyrics, the dialogues of *Kalittokai* (poems of unrequited or mismatched love), chorus folk song, descriptions of city and village, lovingly technical accounts of dance and music, and strikingly dramatic scenes of love and tragic death. One of the great achievements of Tamil genius, the *Cilappatikāram* is a detailed poetic witness to Tamil culture, its varied religions, town plans and city types, the commingling of Greek, Arab, and Tamil peoples, and the arts of dance and music.

Maṇimēkalai (the heroine’s name, “Girdle of Gems”), the second, “twin,” epic (the last part of which is missing), by Cātaṇār, continues the story of the *Cilappatikāram*; the heroine is Mātavi’s daughter, Maṇimēkalai, a dancer and courtesan like her mother. Maṇimēkalai is torn between her passion for a princely lover and her spiritual yearnings, the first encouraged by her grandmother, the second by her mother. She flees the attentions of the prince, and, while he pursues her, she attains magical powers: she changes forms; survives prison, lecherous villains, and other dangers; converts the Queen; and finally goes to Pukār, which is being destroyed by oceanic erosion, worships Kaṇṇaki, and arrives in Vañci to work in famine relief and to perform “penance.” Unlike the *Cilappatikāram*, the *Maṇimēkalai* is

partisan to Buddhism. It is known for its poetry and its lively discussions of religion and philosophy.

***Bhakti* poetry**

From the 6th century onward, a movement with religious origins made itself heard in literature. The movement was that of *bhakti*, or intense personal devotion to the two principal gods of Hinduism, Śiva and Vishnu. The earliest *bhakti* poets were the followers of Śiva, the Nāyaṇārs (Śiva Devotees), whose first representative was the poetess Kāraikkāl Ammaiyār, who called herself a *pēy*, or ghostly minion of Śiva, and sang ecstatically of his dances. Tirumūlar was a mystic and reformer in the so-called Siddhānta (Perfected Man) school of Śaivism, which rejected caste and asceticism, and believed that the body is the true temple of Śiva. There were 12 early Nāyaṇār saints. Similar poets, in the tradition of devotion to the god Vishnu, also belonged to this early period. Called Ālvārs (Immersed Ones), they had as their first representatives Poykai, Pūtaṇ, and Pēyār, who composed “centuries” (groups of 100) of linked verses (*antāti*), in which the final line of a verse is the beginning line of the next and the final line of the last verse is the beginning of the first, so that a “garland” is formed. To these Ālvārs, God is the light of lights, lit in the heart.

The most important Nāyaṇārs were Appar and Campantar, in the 7th century, and Cuntarar, in the 8th. Appar, a self-mortifying Jain ascetic before he became a Śaiva saint, sings of his conversion to a religion of love, surprised by the Lord stealing into his heart. After him, the term *tēvāram* (“private worship”) came to mean “hymn.” Campantar, too, wrote these personal, “bone-melting” songs for the common man. Cuntarar, however, who sees a vision of 63 Tamil saints—rich, poor, male, female, of every caste and trade, unified even with bird and beast in the love of God—epitomizes *bhakti*. To him and other Bhaktas, every act is worship, every word God’s name. Unlike the ascetics, they return man to the world of men, bringing hope, joy, and beauty into religion and making worship an act of music. Their songs have become part of temple ritual. Further, in *bhakti*, erotic love (as seen in *akam*) in all its phases became a metaphor for man’s love for God, the lover.

In the 9th century, Māṇikkavāḥakar, in his great, moving collection of hymns in *Tiruvācakam*, sees Śiva as lover, lord, master, and guru; the poet sings richly and intimately of all sensory joys merging in God. Minister and scholar, he had a child’s love for God.

Āṇṭāl (8th century), a Vaiṣṇava poetess, is literally love-sick for Krishna. Periyālvār, her father, sings of Krishna in the aspect of a divine child, originating a new genre of celebrant poetry. Kulacēkarar, a Cēra prince, sings of both Rāma and Krishna, identifying himself with several roles in the holy legends: a *gopī* in love with Krishna or his mother, Devakī, who misses nursing him, or the exiled Rāma’s father, Daśaratha. Tiruppāṇālvār, an untouchable poet (*pāṇaṇ*), sang 10 songs about the god in Śrīraṅgam, his eyes, mouth, chest, navel, his clothes, and feet. To these Bhaktas, God is not only love but beauty. His creation is his jewel; in separation he longs for union, as man longs for him. Tirumaṅkaiālvār, religious

philosopher, probably guru (personal religious teacher and spiritual guide in Hinduism) to the Pallava kings, and poet of more than 1,000 verses, was apparently responsible for the building of many Vaiṣṇava temples. The last of the Ālvārs, Nammālvār (Our Ālvārā, writing in the 9th century, expresses poignantly both the pain and ecstasy of being in love with God, revivifying mythology into revelation.

Period of the Tamil Cōḷa Empire (10th–13th century)

The next period, the time of the Tamil Cōḷa Empire (10th–13th centuries), saw an awakening of neighbouring literatures: Kannada, Telugu, and Malayalam. The first extant Kannada work is the 9th-century *Kavirājamārga* (“The Royal Road of Poets”), a work of rhetoric rather indebted to Sanskrit rhetoricians, containing the first descriptions of the Kannada country, people, and dialects, with references to earlier works. From the 10th century on, *campū* narratives (part prose, part verse) became popular both in Kannada and in Telugu, as did renderings of the Sanskrit epics *Rāmāyaṇa* and *Mahābhārata* and Jaina legends and biography.

In Kannada, this period was dominated by the “three gems” of Jaina literature, Pampa, Ponna, and Ranna, as well as by Nāgavarma I, a 10th-century Kannada grammarian. Pampa was the *ādikavi* (“first of poets”), having attained that stature with two great epics: *Vikramārjuna Vijaya* and *Ādipurāṇa*. The former is a rendering of the *Mahābhārata*, with the hero, Arjuna, identified with the poet’s royal patron, Arikēsari. This felicitous epic is known for its succinct, powerful characterizations, its rich descriptions of Kannada country and court, its moving sentiments, and its harmonious blend of Sanskrit and Kannada. While the *Vikramārjuna* is a secular work, Pampa’s *Ādipurāṇa* tells the story of the Jaina hero-saint Purudēva, his previous lives, his life from birth to marriage to holy death, as well as the lives of his sons, Bharata and Bāhubali.

Telugu had its *ādikavi* (“first of poets”), in the Brahmin Nannaya Bhaṭṭa (1100–60), who, in *campū* style, wrote three books of a version of the *Mahābhārata*, later finished by Tikkana (13th century) and by Errāpraggaḍa. Like other regional versions of the *Mahābhārata*, the Telugu version is not a literal translation but an interpretation, with many local elements and differences of emphasis; for example, Nannaya emphasizes the importance of Vedic religion. Such works have made the Sanskrit epics and *Purāṇas* part of a live and growing tradition, both oral and literary, in the regional language.

This period also saw the eminence of Kampan’s Tamil version of the *Rāmāyaṇa* (12th century). In him there is a climactic blend of earlier Śaṅgam poetry, Tamil epics, the Ālvārs’ fervour of personal *bhakti* (devotion) toward Rāma, folk motifs, and Sanskrit stories, metres, and poetic devices. Instead of a just king and a perfect man, Rāma is an incarnation of Vishnu and an intense object of devotion, dwarfing the Vedic gods; Kampan called his work *Irāmāvatāram* (“Rāma’s Incarnation”); yet the emphasis is not on Vishnu but on *dharma* (“the law”), localized and Tamilized. More like Sanskrit than Śaṅgam poets, Kampan revels

in elaborate metaphor, hyperbole, and fanciful descriptions of virtue and nature. The work is long, consisting of about 40,000 lines; the *Yuttakāṇṭam* (“War Canto”) alone, with 14 battles, equals the *Iliad* in length. The poem is also justly known for its variety of style, its exploitation of the resources of Tamil and Sanskrit both in form and content, its humour, and its handling of the narrative, dramatic, and lyric modes.

Kampan’s popularity extended not only into all of Tamil country but apparently into the north, influencing some episodes of Tulsī’s Hindi version of the *Rāmāyaṇa*, and into northern Kerala, where 32 plays based on Kampan are enacted ritually with marionettes in Śiva temples.

Pre-15th-century Tamil influence on early Malayalam, the language of Kerala, was strong and led to the literature of *pāṭṭu* (“song”), in which only Dravidian, or Tamil, phonemes may occur and Tamil-like second-syllable rhymes are kept. The best known *pāṭṭu* is *Rāmacaritam* (c. 12th–13th century; “Deeds of Rāma”), probably the earliest Malayalam work written in a mixture of Tamil and Malayalam. Other *pāṭṭus* in Tamilized Malayalam, written by a family of poets (14th–15th centuries) from Niraṇam in central Travancore, appear in *Kaṇṇassan Pāṭṭukaḷ*, in which Tamil conventions of metre and phonology are loosened and more Sanskrit is allowed. Similar in style is a version of the *Rāmāyaṇa* by Rāma Paṇikkar, an abridged *Bhagavadgītā* by his uncle Mādhava Paṇikkar, and a condensed *Mahābhārata* and the 10th book of the *Bhāgavata-Purāṇa* by another uncle, Śaṅkara Paṇikkar.

As strong as Tamil influence was, the predominant influence on Malayalam was Sanskrit, in language as well as literary form. The influence on language led early to a mixture of Sanskrit and Malayalam in a literary dialect called *maṇipravāḷa* (meaning “necklace of diamonds and coral”). The author of the *Līlātilakam*, a 14th-century treatise on grammar and poetics, describes both the Tamilizing and Sanskritizing trends and genres and insists on harmonious blendings. Many kinds of poems were composed in *maṇipravāḷa* styles: *kūḍyāṭṭams* (dramatic presentations using Sanskrit *ślokas*, or epic metres, for hero and heroine, *maṇipravāḷa* for the clown, and Malayalam for explanations intended for the laity); didactic works such as the 11th-century *Vaiśikatantram* (“Advice to a Courtesan by Her Mother”); 13th- and 14th-century *campūs* (narratives combining prose and verse) on dancers, such as *Unniyati Caritam* by Dāmōdara Cākkiyār; and several short poems in praise of women and kings. *Maṇipravāḷa* poems like these are essentially artificial expressions of courtly high-caste poets, preoccupied with eroticism and harlots. The *Candrōtsavam* (c. 1500; “Moon Festival”) is a satire on the voluptuary *maṇipravāḷa* tradition, jostling together all the famed courtesans of the period.

Coexisting with the Tamilized and Sanskritized Malayalam poems produced by scholars was a live *pacca* (“pure, fresh”) Malayalam tradition represented mostly by folk songs and ballads—for example, *Vaḍukkan Pāṭṭukaḷ* (hero ballads of the northern Malabar Coast); songs sung during weddings, deaths, or festivals; and work songs. All three styles—the indigenous folk style, the Tamil, and the Sanskrit—began to converge and influence each

other by the 15th century in works such as *Kṛṣṇa Pāṭṭu* (“Song of Krishna”) and *Gāthā* (“Song”). Such grafting reached its full flowering in the 16th-century poet Eḷuttaccan (Father [or Leader] of Letters), who popularized the *kīḷippāṭṭu* (“parrot song”), a genre in which the narrator is a parrot, a bee, a swan, and so on. His outstanding works are *Adhyātma Rāmāyaṇam*, *Bhāratam*, and *Bhāgavatam*, all based on Sanskrit originals yet powerfully re-created with masterly language craft.

While Vaiṣṇava works were proliferating in Malayalam, Śaiva movements swept the other three languages, Tamil, Kannada, and Telugu. In Tamil, the hymns of the Nāyaṇārs were arranged and anthologized for scriptural and recitative use by the 11th century. Another such consolidation of sacred materials was Cēkkiḷār’s 12th-century *Toṇṭar Purāṇam*, or *Periyapurāṇam*, narrating in epic style the lives of the 63 great Śaiva saints and creating a tradition for all Śaivas, even in the Kannada and Telugu areas. The theology of the Siddhānta (Perfected Man) school of Śaivism was elaborated in Meykaṇṭār’s *Civañāṇa-pōtam* (13th century).

By the 12th century, a new Kannada genre, the *vacana* (“saying” or “prose poem”), had come into being with the Vīraśaiva saints. In the language of the people, the saints expressed their radical views on religion and society, rejected both Brahminical ritualism and Jaina ascetic world negation, called all men to the *anubhāva* (“experience”) of God, and broke the bonds of caste, creed, and sexual difference. Five important poet-saints were Dāsimayya; Basava, a self-searching social reformer and a minister of the Jaina king Bijjaḷa; Allama Prabhu, the elder and metaphysical master of them all; Mahādēviyakka, a woman saint singing love poems to Śiva; and Cannabasava, a brilliant theologian of the movement, who elaborated the theory of “six stages” of mystic ascent for the devotee. The many-faceted lyrics written by the poet-saints were in the spoken dialects of Middle Kannada, yet they drew on archetypal human images as well as ancient pan-Indian symbology for their intense and searing expressions of *bhakti*. Inspired by these lyrics, Harihara, in the late 12th century, wrote some 120 *ragaḷe* (blank verse) biographies of the Śaiva saints, including the Vīraśaiva (or Liṅgāyat) and the earlier Tamil Nāyaṇārs. In the early 13th century, his disciple and nephew, Rāghavāṅka, wrote, in *ṣaṭpadi*s (six-line stanzas), of the lives of saints, in well-structured works such as *Sōmanātha Carite* and *Siddharāma Caritra*; his most mature work is *Hariścandrakāvya*, an unequalled reworking of an ancient Job-like story of Hariścandra, who suffered every ordeal for his love of truth. The Vīraśaiva saints’ lives and the *vacana* (“saying” or “prose poem”) literature were codified in a masterpiece called *Śūnya Sampādane* (“The Achievement of Nothing”), consisting of dialogues interweaving the saints’ *vacanas*, with the poet Allama Prabhu as the central figure.

Contemporary with the 13th-century Vīraśaiva saints were Telugu Śaiva poets such as Pāḷkuriki Sōmanātha, who composed the *Basavapurāṇam* employing popular metres and idiomatic Telugu. His *Paṇḍitārādhyā Caritra* is a life of the Śaiva devotee Paṇḍitārādhyā as well as a book of general knowledge including social customs, arts, crafts, and particularly music. His *Vṛṣādhīpa Śatakam* consists of verses in Tamil, Kannada, Marathi, Sanskrit, and

Telugu. This work was probably the first of the genre of *śatakas* (“centuries” of verses) literature, particularly popular in Telugu but also written in the other three languages as well as in Sanskrit (see above Sanskrit: formative period [1200–400 BC]).

Also of the 13th century is Āṇḍayya’s *Kabbigara Kāva* (“The Poet’s Defender”), in Kannada, a linguistic tour de force, eschewing unmodified Sanskrit forms; and Mallikārijuna’s *Sūktisudhārṇava*, an excellent Kannada anthology of lyrics and passages. From 1240 to 1326, poets of Telugu produced over 100 verse renderings of the Sanskrit epic *Rāmāyaṇa* and many more in prose, the earliest being *Raṅganātha Rāmāyaṇa*, assigned to Gōna Buddhā Redḍi.

14th–19th century

The next age, from the 14th to the 16th century, is the great age of the Vijayanagar Empire. In this period, Kannada and Telugu were under the aegis of one dynasty and were also hospitable to the influence of neighbouring Muslim Bahmanī kingdoms. Śrīnātha was a 15th-century poet honoured in many courts for his scholarship, poetry, and polemics. He rendered Sanskrit poems and wrote *Haravilāsam* (Four Śaiva Tales); *Kṛīḍābhirāmam*, a charming, often vulgar account of social life in Warangal; and *Palanāṭi Vīra Caritra*, a popular ballad on a fratricidal war. Many erotic *cāṭus*, or stray epigrams, are also attributed to him. Bammara Pōtana, a great Śaiva devotee in life and poetry, unschooled yet a scholar, is widely known for his *Bhāgavatam*, a masterpiece that is said to excel the original Sanskrit *Bhāgavata-Purāṇa*. Tāḷlapāka Annāmācārya, son of a great family of scholars, fathered an exciting new genre of devotional song, all addressed to the god Śrī Veṅkaṭeśvara of Tirupati (a form of Vishnu). His *Saṅkīrtana Lakṣaṇam* is a collection of 32,000 songs in Sanskrit and Telugu, which made a significant contribution to Karnatic (southern Indian) musical technique.

The 16th century was an age of patronage by Vijayanagar kings, beginning with Kṛṣṇa Dēva Rāya, himself a poet versed in Sanskrit, Kannada, and Telugu. The *rāyala yugam* (“age of kings”) was known for its courtly *prabandhas*, virtuoso poetic narratives by and for pandits (learned men). Among the most famous court poets were Piṅgaḷi Sūranna, whose verse novel, *Kalāpurṇodayam* (1550)—a story full of surprises, magic, and changes of identity—is justly celebrated for its artistry; and Tenāli Rāmakṛṣṇa, known for his clownish pranks and humour, whose writings are the centre of a very popular cycle of tales in all four Dravidian languages.

During the 16th century and for the next few centuries, Telugu poets also flourished outside the Telugu country, especially in Tanjore (Thanjavūr) and Madurai, in Tamil country, and Pudukkoṭṭa and Mysore, in Kannada country. Their most important contribution was to native Kannada and Telugu dance drama on mythological themes, called *yakṣagāna*. The form is comparable to *kathākali* in the Malayalam area and to *terukkūttu* (“street drama”) and *kuṛavañci* (“gypsy drama”) in the Tamil area. The earliest Telugu *yakṣagāna* text is

Sugrīva Vijayam (c. 1570), by Kandukuru Rudra Kavi; the earliest in Kannada is probably Śāntavīra Dēśika's *Saundarēśvara* (1678). The most celebrated of Kannada *yakṣagāna* dramatists is the versatile Pārti Subba, who flourished around 1800 and is known for his moving *Rāmāyaṇa* episodes and songs.

The 15th and 16th centuries produced some of the most popular classics in Kannada. Of these the greatest is Gadugu's *Kumāra Vyāsa*, or *Nāraṇappa*'s, 10 cantos of the *Mahābhārata*; recited in assemblies as well as in households, these are a continual delight, abounding in humour, passion, and memorable poetry. In *Prabhuliṅgalīle*, Cāmarasa made poetry out of the life of the poet-saint Allama. The *Jaimini Bhārata* and the many versions of *Rāmāyaṇa* episodes (especially Sītā's abandonment in the forest) written by the distinguished Śaiva epic poet Lakṣmīśa are known for their melodious verses and moving scenes. Ratnākaravarṇi's *Bharateśa Vaibhava* is a great Jaina story, tersely told in a Kannada song metre and celebrated for its depiction of many *rasas* ("moods"), especially the erotic.

Kannada Vaiṣṇava *dāsas* ("servants [of God]") wrote in a song genre called *pada*, parallel and often indebted to the Vīraśaiva *vacanas* ("sayings" or "prose poems"). Purandaradāsa, a rich 16th-century merchant turned mendicant, saint, and poet, composed *bhakti* (devotional) songs on Viṭṭhala (a manifestation of the god Vishnu), criticizing divisions of caste and class and calling on the mercy of God. His *padas* and *kīrtanas* ("lauds") are also landmarks in Karnatic music. Kanakadāsa, his contemporary and a shepherd by birth, wrote *padas* and longer popular works. *Dāsa* songs are part of the repertory of all South Indian musicians.

The folk *tripadi* ("three-line verse") of Sarvajña (1700?) is a household word for wit and wisdom, like the *Kuraḷ* in Tamil (see above Eighteen Ethical Works) and the "century" of four-line verses in Telugu by Vēmana (15th century). The moral, social, satiric, and wise proverb-like aphorisms of Vēmana and Sarvajña are widely quoted by pundit and layman alike. Equally popular in the Malayalam region is the 18th-century folk poet of *tullals* (a song-dance form), Kuñcan Nampiyār, unparalleled for his wit and exuberance, his satiric sketches of caste types, his versions of Sanskrit *Purāṇa* narratives projected on the backdrop of Kerala, and his humorous renderings even of mythic characters.

The 17th and 18th centuries also saw Tamil court poetry—*Purāṇas*, translations from the Sanskrit, and praise poems, known more for their learning and imitative character than for their genius. This was also a period of many schisms and the founding of monasteries in Śaivism and Vaiṣṇavism, which led to many sectarian and polemic works. Muslims and Christians also wrote epics in the Hindu *Purāṇa* style; for example, Umarḱ-p-pulavar's 17th-century *Cīrā-p-purāṇam*, on the life of the prophet Muḥammad, and Father Beschi's *Tēmpāvaṇi*, on the life of St. Joseph, with echoes from both Kampan and the 16th-century Italian poet Torquato Tasso.

Probably the most impressive Tamil poetry of this period is that of Arunakiriv's learned and melodious *Tiruppukal* (praise of Munikaṇ) and of the Cittars, eclectic mystics known for their radical, fierce folk songs and common-speech style. Tāyumāṇavar (18th century) and Paṭṭiṇattār (and later, in the 19th century, Rāmaliṅkar) are poets of unconditioned love, self-search, and rejection of corrupt society.

The 17th and 18th centuries are also periods of datable folk expression, which include many *tiruvilaiyāṭal* ("stories of God's sport") *purāṇas*; temple tales (about miracles that took place in the temple); *kuravañci* (i.e., "gypsy," a kind of musical dance drama); *paḷḷus* (plays about village agricultural life); realistic *noṇṭi-nāṭakams* ("dramas of the lame"), in which a Hindu temple god cures lameness; *kummi* songs sung by young girls, clapping as they dance round and round; and *ammāṇai* ballads. Noteworthy historical ballads are *Kaṭṭa Pomman*, about a chieftain who revolted against the British, and *Tēciṅku-rācaṇ Katai*, about the prince of Gingi and his Muslim friend. Malayalam *āṭṭakkatha*, the literature associated with *kathākali*, the complex traditional dance drama, was also written during this period. Royal poets such as Kōṭṭayattu Tampurān, in the 17th century, and Kārttika Tiruṇal, in the 18th, wrote *āṭṭakkathās*.

A.K. Ramanujan

Indo-Aryan literatures: 12th–18th century

It is difficult to pinpoint the time when the Indo-Aryan dialects first became identifiable as languages. Around the 10th century AD, Sanskrit was still the language of high culture and serious literature, as well as the language of ritual. The spoken language, however, had continued to develop, and at the turn of the millennium there began to appear, at different times during the subsequent two or three centuries, the languages now known as the regional languages of the subcontinent: Hindi, Bengali, Kashmiri, Punjabi, Rajasthani, Marathi, Gujarati, Oriya, Sindhi (which did not develop an appreciable literature), and Assamese; Urdu did not develop until much later (see below Islāmic literatures: 11th–19th century).

The literatures in their early stages show three characteristics: first, a debt to Sanskrit that can be seen in their use of Sanskrit lexicon and imagery, in their use of myth and story preserved in that refined language, and frequently in their conformity to ideals and values put forward in Sanskrit texts of poetics and philosophy; second, a less obvious debt to their immediate Apabhramsha past (dialects that are immediate predecessors of the modern Indo-Aryan vernaculars); third, regional peculiarities.

The narratives in the early stages of the development of the languages are most often mythological tales drawn from the epics and *Purāṇas* of classical Hindu tradition (see above Sanskrit, Pāli, and Prākṛit literatures: 1400 BC–AD 1200), though in later times, in the 17th and 18th centuries, secular romances and heroic tales were also treated in narrative poems.

Although the themes of the narratives are based on *Purāṇa* tales, often they include materials peculiar to the area in which the narrative was written.

In addition to themes, regional literatures frequently borrowed forms from the Sanskrit; for example, the *Rāmāyaṇa* appears in a 16th-century Hindi version by Tulsīdās, called the *Rāmcaritmānas* (“Lake of Rāma’s Deeds”), which has the same form, though a different emphasis, as the Sanskrit poem. The stylized conventions and imagery of Sanskrit court poetry also appear, though here, too, with different emphasis; for example, in the work of the 15th-century Maithili (Eastern Hindi) lyric poet Vidyāpati. Even the somewhat abstruse rhetorical speculations of the Sanskrit poetic schools of analysis were used as formulas for the production of 17th-century Hindi court poetry; the *Rasikapriyā* (“Beloved of the Connoisseur”) of Keśavadāsa is a good example of this kind of tour de force.

There are other characteristics common to the regional literatures, some of which come not from Sanskrit but most likely from the Apabhramsha. There are two poetic forms, for example, that are found in many northern Indian languages: the *bārah-māsā* (“twelve months”), in which 12 beauties of a girl or 12 attributes of a deity might be extolled by relating them to the characteristics of each month of the year; and the *caūtīs* (“thirty-four”), in which the 34 consonants of the northern Indian Devanāgarī alphabet are used as the initial letters of a poem of 34 lines or stanzas, describing 34 joys of love, 34 attributes, and so on.

Finally, there are common characteristics that may have come either through Apabhramsha or through the transmission of stories and texts from one language to another. The stories of Gopi-candra, the cult hero of the Nātha Yogī sect, a school of mendicant *sannyāsins*, were known from Bengal to the Punjab even in the early period. And the story of the Rājput heroine Padmāvatī, originally a romance, was beautifully recorded, with a Ṣūfī (mystic) twist, by the 16th-century Muslim Hindi poet Malik Muḥammad Jāyasī and later by the 17th-century Bengali Muslim poet Ālāol. From the late 13th through the 17th century, bhakti (devotional) poetry took hold in one region after another in northern and eastern India. Beginning with the *Jñāneśvarī*, a Marathi verse commentary on the *Bhagavadgītā* written by Jñāneśvara (Jñānadeva) in the late 13th century, the devotional movement spread through Mahārāshtra, in the works of the poet-saints Nāmdev and Tukārām; through Rājasthān, where it is represented by the works of Mīrā Bāī; through northern India, in the poetry of Tulsīdās, Sūrdās, Kabīr, and others; through Mithilā, in the work of the great poet Vidyāpati; and into Bengal, where Caṇḍīdās and others sang of their love of God. Because of the *bhakti* movement, beautiful lyric poetry and passionate devotional song were created; and in some cases, as in Bengal, serious philosophical works and biographies were written for the first time in a regional language rather than in Sanskrit. The languages and their literatures gained strength as mediums of self-expression as well as exposition. And, although there is much Sanskrit imagery and expression in the poetry and song, as well as similarities to Sanskrit textual models, its basic character is not Sanskritic: true to the nature of any spoken, everyday language, it is more vital than polished, more vivid than refined.

One more historical generality can be stated regarding regional Indian literature before considering the characteristics peculiar to the several “Indian literatures.” In all of the early literatures, writing was lyrical, narrative, or didactic, entirely in verse, and all in some way related to religion or love or both. In the 16th century, prose texts, such as the Assamese histories known as the *buranji* texts, began to appear.

Hindi

What is commonly spoken of as Hindu is actually a range of languages, from Maithili in the east to Rajasthani in the west. The first major work in Hindi is the 12th-century epic poem *Pr̥thvīrāj Rāsau*, by Chand Bardai of Lahore, which recounts the feats of Pr̥thvīrāj, the last Hindu king of Delhi before the Islāmic invasions. The work evolved from the bardic tradition maintained at the courts of the Rājputs. Noteworthy also is the poetry of the Persian poet Amīr Khosrow, who wrote in the Awadhi dialect. Most of the literature in Hindi is religious in inspiration; in the late 15th and early 16th centuries, the reform-minded Kabīr, for example, wrote sturdy short poems in which he sought to reconcile Islām and Hinduism.

The most celebrated author in Hindi is Tulsīdās of Rājāpur (died 1623), a Brahmin who renounced the world early in life and spent his days in Benares (Vārānasi) as a religious devotee. He wrote much, mostly in Awadhi, and focussed Hinduism on the worship of Rāma. His most important work is the *Rāmcaritmānas* (“Sacred Lake of the Acts of Rāma”), which is based on the Sanskrit *Rāmāyaṇa*. More than any other work it has become a Hindu sacred text for the Hindi-speaking area and annually has been staged in the popular Rām Līlā festival.

Outstanding among the followers of Vallabha, philosopher and *bhakti* (“devotion”) advocate of the Middle Ages, is the blind poet Sūrdās (died 1563), who composed countless *bhajans* (chants) in praise of Krishna and Rādhā, which are collected in the *Sūrsāgar* (“Ocean of Sūrdās”). While many of the *bhakti* poets were of modest origin, an exception was Mīrā Bāi, a princess of Jodhpur, who wrote her famous lyrics both in Hindi and Gujarati; the quality of her poetry, still very popular, is not as high, however, as that of Sūrdās. Significant also is the religious epic *Padmāvatī* by Jāyasī, a Muslim from former Oudh state. Written in Awadhi (c. 1540), the epic is composed according to the conventions of Sanskrit poetics.

The 18th century saw the beginning of a gradual transformation from the older forms of religious lyric and epic to new literary forms influenced by Western models that began to be known. The new trends reached their pinnacle in the work of Prem Chand (died 1936), whose novels (especially *Godān*) and short stories depict common rural life; and in the work of Harishchandra of Benares (died 1885), honoured as Bhāratendu (Moon of India), who wrote in the Braj Bhasha dialect.

Bengali

While developments in Bengali literature began somewhat earlier, they followed the same general course as those in Hindi. The oldest documents are Buddhist didactic texts, called *caryā-padas* (“lines on proper practice”), which have been dated to the 10th and 11th centuries and are the oldest testimony to literature in any Indo-Aryan language.

Bengali poetry, including poetry by Bengalis in other dialects, is largely written in three distinct genres. It is certain that well before the 15th century there existed texts in a typically Bengali genre called *maṅgal-kāvya* (“poetry of an auspicious happening”), which consists of eulogies of gods and goddesses; such poetry is likely to have had a considerable history in oral transmission before it was committed to writing. A good example of an orally transmitted *maṅgal* poem is the *Caṇḍī-maṅgal* (“Poem of the Goddess Caṇḍī”), by Mukundarāma, which was put into written form in the latter part of the 15th century. *Maṅgal* poetry remained a favourite genre well into the 18th century, when Bhārat-candra wrote the *Annadā-maṅgal* (“Maṅgal of the Goddess Annadā [the Giver of Food]”), a witty and sophisticated poem that bears little resemblance to its more rustic forebears. Despite this popularity, it is the devotional lyrics to the divine pair Krishna and Rādhā that are still known and sung today in Bengal, and these lyrics are the gems of medieval Bengali literature.

Poems of the second genre, the *mahākāvya* (“great poem,” but not to be confused with the Sanskrit *mahākāvya* genre), are based mainly on the Sanskrit models of the *Mahābhārata*, *Rāmāyaṇa*, and *Purāṇas*. Kṛtibās Ojhā (late 14th century) stands at the beginning of this literature; he wrote a version of the *Rāmāyaṇa* that often differs from the Sanskrit original, for he includes many local legends and places the setting in Bengal. Kavīndrā (died 1525) wrote on the *Mahābhārata* theme, as did Kāsiram Dās in the 17th century.

The third genre, *padāvalī* (“string of verse”) songs, is also found elsewhere; inspired by the religious *bhakti* movement, the songs resemble the devotional poetry of the Nāyaṇārs and Ālvārs in Tamil. It was such poetry that established Bengali as a significant literary language. The earliest work in what may be considered a distinctively Bengali style is the *Śrīkṛṣṇa-kīrtana* (“Praise of the Lord Krishna”), a long *padāvalī* poem by Caṇḍīdās, which is dated to the early 15th century. In it the poet praises the virtues and celebrates the loves of Krishna, a theme that had remained popular in Bengal ever since its first glorification by the Bengali Sanskrit poet Jayadeva, who composed his *Gītagovinda* (“The Cowherd Song”) in the 12th century. *Padāvalī* songs describe and glorify all phases of Krishna’s love for the cowherds’ wives (especially Rādhā, who later became a goddess), and it is love poetry before it is religious poetry. After the great Bengali mystic and saint Caitanya (died 1533), love is religion, and the erotic is inspirited with religious fervour. The great flowering of this poetry occurred in the 16th and 17th centuries.

Religious edification took the forms not only of *maṅgals* and *padāvalīs* but also of biography (more like hagiography) and philosophy. Important in that style is the long hagiography *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* (“Elixir of the Life of Caitanya”), by the 16th-century author Kṛṣṇadās.

While most of the literature is Hindu in theme and inspiration, there arose a secular Bengali literature among Bengali Muslims. One of the outstanding Muslim poets is Ālāol, author of the *Padmāvatī* (c. 1648), which was written after the poem of the same name by the Hindi poet Jāyasī.

Assamese

The earliest text in a language that is incontestably Assamese is the *Prahlāda-caritra* of Hema Sarasvati (or Saraswati; 13th century); in a heavily Sanskritized style it tells the story, from the *Viṣṇu-Purāṇa*, of how the mythical king Prahlāda's faith and devotion to Vishnu saved him from destruction and restored the moral order. The first great Assamese poet was Kavirāja Mādhava Kandali (14th century), who translated the Sanskrit *Rāmāyaṇa* and wrote *Devajit*, a narrative on the god Krishna. In Assamese, too, the *bhakti* movement brought with it a great literary upsurge; the most famous Assamese poet of the period was the saint-poet Śaṅkaradeva (1449–1568), whose 27 works of poetry and devotion are alive today and who inspired such saint-poets as Mādhavadeva to write lyrics of great beauty. Peculiar to Assamese literature are the *buranjis*, chronicles written in a prose tradition brought to Assam by the Ahoms of Burma. These date in Assamese from the 16th century, while in the Ahom language they are much earlier.

Oriya

Mādaḷā-pāñji ("The Drum Chronicle") texts in Oriya, the chronicles of the great temple of Jagannātha in Puri, date from the 12th century. They are in prose, and as such they represent the earliest prose in a regional Indo-Aryan language, although they cannot be said to be literary texts. The 14th century was productive for Oriya literature. Dating from this period are the anonymous *Kalasa-cautīśa*, which tells in 34 verses the story of the marriage of the god Śiva and the mountain goddess Pārvatī, and the famous *Caṇḍī-purāṇa* of Saraladāsa. But the *bhakti* period was once again the most stimulating one; the best known medieval Oriya poet is Jagannātha Dās (whose name means Servant of Jagannātha), a 16th-century disciple of the Bengali Vaiṣṇava saint Caitanya, who spent the better part of his life in Puri. Among the many works of Jagannātha Dās is a version of the Sanskrit *Bhāgavata-Purāṇa* that is still popular in Orissa today.

Marathi

With Bengali, Marathi is the oldest of the regional literatures in Indo-Aryan, dating from about AD 1000. In the 13th century, two Brahminical sects arose, the Mahānubhāva and the Varakari Panth, both of which put forth vast quantities of literature. The latter sect was perhaps the more productive, for it became associated with *bhakti*, when that movement stirred Mahārāshtra in the early 14th century, and particularly with the popular cult of Viṭṭhoba at Pandharpur. It was out of this tradition that the great names of early Marathi literature came: Jñāneśvara, in the 13th century; Nāmdev, his younger contemporary, some

of whose devotional songs are included in the holy book of the Sikhs, the *Ādi Granth*; and the 16th-century writer Eknāth, whose most famous work is a Marathi version of the 11th book of the *Bhāgavata-Purāṇa*. Among the *bhakti* poets of Mahārāshtra the most famous is Tukārām, who wrote in the 16th century. A unique contribution of Marathi is the tradition of *povādās*, heroic stories popular among a martial people. There is no way of dating the earliest of these; but the literary tradition is particularly vital at the time of Śivajī, the great military leader of Mahārāshtra (born 1630), who led his armies against the might of the Mughal emperor Aurangzeb.

Gujarati

The oldest examples of Gujarati date from the writings of the 12th-century Jaina scholar and saint Hemacandra. The language had fully developed by the late 12th century. There are works extant from the middle of the 14th century, didactic texts written in prose by Jaina monks; one such is the *Bālākābodha* (“Instructions to the Young”), by Taruṇa-prabha. A non-Jaina text from the same period is the *Vasanta-vilāsa* (“The Joys of Spring”). The two Gujarati *bhakti* poets, both of the 15th century, are Narasiṃha Mahatā (or Mehtā) and Bhālaṇa (or Puruṣottama Mahārāja); the latter cast the 10th book of the *Bhāgavata-Purāṇa* into short lyrics. By far the most famous of the *bhakti* poets is the woman saint Mīrā Bāl, who lived in the first half of the 16th century. Mīrā, though married, thought of Krishna as her true husband, and the lyrics telling of her relationship with her god and lover are among the warmest and most movingly personal in any Indian literature. One of the best known of the non-*bhakti* Gujarati poets is Premānanda Bhaṭṭa (16th century), who wrote narrative poems based on *Purāṇa*-like tales; although his themes were conventional, his characters were real and vital, and he infused new life into the literature of his language.

Punjabi

Punjabi developed a literature later than most of the other regional languages of the subcontinent; and some of the early writings, such as those of the first Sikh Gurū, Nānak (late 15th and early 16th centuries), are in Old Hindi rather than true Punjabi. The first work identifiable as Punjabi is the *Janam-sākhī*, a 16th-century biography of Gurū Nānak by Bala. In 1604, Arjun, the fifth Gurū of the Sikhs, collected the poems of Nānak and others into what is certainly the most famous book to originate in the Punjab (though its language is not entirely Punjabi), the *Adi Granth* (“First Book”). Writing that is not merely incidentally Punjabi began in the 17th century and is almost entirely by Muslims. Between 1616 and 1666, a writer named ‘Abdullāh, for example, composed a major work called *Bāra Anva* (“Twelve Topics”), which is a treatise on Islām in 9,000 couplets. Muslim Ṣūfis, such as Bullhē Shāh (died 1758), also contributed many devotional lyrics, and Ṣūfī Islām can be said to have been the main stimulus to Punjabi literature in the medieval period. There are also many romances in the language (as in Rajasthani) which, being oral literature, are undatable.

Kashmiri

The hitherto commonly accepted period of Old Kashmiri is 1200–1500; but in fact the earliest example of the language is found in 94 four-line stanzas embedded in the Sanskrit philosophical work *Mahānaya-prakāśa* (“Illumination of the Highest Attainment”), which some scholars now date as late as the 15th century. As is true for Gujarati, the most famous poets of Kashmiri in this period are women. Lallā (14th century) wrote poems about the god Śiva; and Hubb Khātun (16th century) and especially Arani-mal (18th century) are famous for their hauntingly beautiful love lyrics. Despite these outstanding poets in Kashmiri, the great literary language of Kashmir in the medieval period was Persian, which was encouraged by many rulers of the country, such as Zayn-ul-‘Ābidīn, in whose 15th-century court were many scholars and poets writing in both the Kashmiri and Persian languages.

Edward C. Dimock

Islāmic literatures: 11th–19th century

The adventure of Islām in India began in the 8th century with the conquest of Sind (the extreme western province), but it was only in the 11th and 12th centuries that Muslim literary and cultural traditions reached the Indian heartland. Then, in the 13th century, refugee noblemen, soldiers, and men of letters from Iran and Central Asia came pouring into India. Although the causes changed, the attraction of India as a place of refuge and gracious patronage did not decline for several subsequent centuries. At the same time Muslim soldier-adventurers continued with their conquests, joining hands with their non-Muslim Indian counterparts in many instances, establishing minor or major kingdoms all over the subcontinent. The political map of India remained very much in flux—except for a brief period during the reign of Akbar—until Queen Victoria declared herself empress of India in 1858. The period of Muslim influence thus extends over 800 years.

At the time of the spread of Muslim power and culture in India, Sanskrit was the chief language of Hindu cultural, learned, and religious expression, while Buddhism and Jainism had lent their prestige and patronage to various Prākritis. The progress of and developments in these literatures remained unaffected by the advent of Islām in India. The emergence of the new Indo-Aryan languages out of the Prākrit and Apabhramsha stages of Sanskrit, however, was furthered by the newcomers, who preferred these regional languages over Sanskrit and encouraged the development of popular regional literatures. The conversion to Islām of a large number of indigenous people enhanced these developments. Thus, the vehicles of literary expression used by those professing Islām in India were regional dialects and languages, both Indo-Aryan and Indo-Iranian, such as Braj, Awadhi, Sindhi, Baluchi, Urdu, Dakhini, and Bengali, as well as the foreign Arabic, Turkish, and Persian spoken by the Muslim immigrants and conquerors. Of these, only Persian and Urdu require detailed consideration; the others will be discussed only briefly.

Arabic

Arabic was the language of the conquerors of Sind. But it enjoyed more permanent prestige as the language of the Qur'ān, the sacred book of Islām; as such it was extensively used for religious scholarship during the medieval period. Even as late as the 18th century, Shāh Walī Allāh, the greatest theologian to have lived in India, wrote his most important treatises in Arabic. Arabic was also used early for historiography and for making Indian scientific books available to the Middle East in translation. One does not find, however, much in the way of significant Arabic belles lettres in India.

Turkish

Although the earliest Muslim conquerors in northern India were Turks, their language was Persian. It was only during the reigns of Bābur and his son Humāyūn (1526–56) that Turkish flourished for a while as a medium of learned expression. Bābur himself was the foremost contributor. Although his memoirs are better known, he also left a volume of verses of considerable merit.

Regional languages

The literatures of the Indo-Iranian languages of Baluchi and Pashto are exclusively creations of Muslim writers. In the Indo-Aryan languages of Kashmiri, Sindhi, and Punjabi, Muslims were the most influential contributors; the names of Lallā (14th century) for Kashmiri, Shāh 'Abd-ul-Laṭīf (17th–18th century) for Sindhi, and Wārīs Shāh (18th century) for Punjabi exemplify that fact. Muslim chieftains gave impetus to the growth of Bengali literature through their patronage of writers and through their efforts to have Sanskrit classics translated into Bengali. There are also many famous Muslim names during the medieval period of Bengali literature, such as Dawlat Qāzī and Ālāol in the 17th century. In the heartland of northern India, notable contributions were made by Muslims to Hindi literatures in the Braj and Awadhi dialects. Malik Muḥammad Jāyasī, Raḥīm, and Manjhan (all 16th century) and 'Uṣman (17th century) are some of the important names. In the 16th, 17th, and 18th centuries in India there was a tremendous production of mystic (Ṣūfī and *bhakti*) poetry in all of the important dialects and languages. It was a period of great mystic, syncretic movements, and the Muslim contribution in the form of love narratives and lyrics was considerable. Quite often metres, motifs, and assorted rhetorical features of Persian *maṣnavīs* and *ghazals* (see below Urdu) were used in a new medium. Moreover, interaction and assimilation took place between the Muslim Ṣūfī traditions, thought, and practices and the Indian *bhakti* schools. Muslim *bhakti* poets either expressed Ṣūfī ideas, which were close to monotheistic orthodoxy as well as to the doctrines of Indian saints Kabīr and Nānak, in the Indian dialects through narrative poems modelled on Persian *maṣnavīs* or chose the path of ecstasy and became devotees of Krishna (which was still close to the more orthodox forms of Ṣūfism). None of them followed the devotional style of Tulsīdās, their contemporary and a devotee of Rāma.

It was, however, in Persian and Urdu that Muslim men of letters made the greatest contributions—contributions that led in the former case to the establishment of an “Indian” school of Persian poetry and influenced profoundly the development of poetry in Afghanistan and Tadzhikistan and, in the latter case, led to the emergence of a unique pan-Indian language and literature in Urdu.

Persian

Maḥmūd of Ghazna, with whom the chain of Muslim conquests in northern India began, was also the patron of Ferdowsī, one of the greatest of Persian poets. The later conquerors admired literature no less. Since the language of all of them was Persian, the growth of Persian literature in India kept pace with its conquest by the Muslims.

Mas‘ūd Sa‘d Salmān (born 1046 in Lahore), who later became the governor of Jullundhur, was the first noteworthy person of Indian origin to have written poetry in Persian. The first truly great poet was Amīr Khosrow, who wrote in the 13th and 14th centuries. Of Turkish descent, born in the district of Etah in northern India, Khosrow was connected with royal courts all his life, even after 1272, when he became a disciple of the great mystic Nizām-ud-Dīn Awliyā. He wrote five books of poems, or *dīvāns*, composed of *ghazals* (see below Urdu), panegyrics and several *mašnavīs*—altogether some 200,000 couplets. In poetry, his innovative spirit displayed itself in *waṣf-nigārī*—that is, descriptions of natural objects in short poems, which Khosrow incorporated within longer ones. His keenness of observation is also evident in his use of local fauna and flora as poetic images. Khosrow’s distinction lies not so much in the fact that he is an innovator, however, as in the fact that he is equally superb in narrative poetry, panegyrics, and lyrics. The range of his popularity and influence can best be gauged by the fact that, in northern Indian folk literature, one comes across numerous songs and riddles consistently attributed to Amīr Khosrow.

In the centuries that followed Khosrow, until the end of the Islāmic period, India contributed to Persian literature in two ways: first, through the production of dictionaries that helped to standardize the language and consolidate its vocabulary; second, through the development of the so-called Indian style of Persian poetry.

It is generally agreed that this Indian style, *sabk-e hindī*, did not originate within the geographic confines of India, though it reached its most sublime form there at the hands of poets who either were born in India or spent their most productive years at various Indian courts. Some of the characteristics of the style are (in the words of one modern critic) the emphasis on

parallel statement . . . ; on complex conceit like that of the seventeenth century English “metaphysical” poets, arising out of economy of expression and telescoping into a single image a variety of emotional states; on “cerebral” artifice in pushing familiar images to unfamiliar and unexpected lengths; and on the

creation of a synthetic poetic diction in which a whole phrase constitutes a single image.

The keen observation of daily life that is also characteristic of Indian Persian poetry could have been inspired by the traditions of classical Sanskrit poetry, with which these poets must have been familiar through the extensive translations done during the reign of the Mughals.

The century (1556–1657) of the reigns of Akbar, Jahāngīr, and Shāh Jahān was the most glorious period for Persian poetry in India, though, except for Fayzī, all of the important poets were immigrants from Persia who found relief from religious and political persecution as well as generous patronage at the hands of the great Mughals and the lesser kings of southern India. The great men of letters of that period were ‘Urfī, Ṭālib Āmulī, Naẓīrī, Zuhūrī, Kalīm, and Ṣā’ib.

The greatest poet of the Indian style, however, was ‘Abdul Qādir Bēdil, born in 1644 in Patna, of Uzbek descent. He came early under the influence of the Ṣūfīs, refused to be attached to any court, and travelled widely throughout India during his long life. Bēdil’s 16 books of poetry contain nearly 147,000 verses and include several *maṣnavīs*. Though ignored by the Iranians, Bēdil’s poetry had an impact on Tadzhik and Uzbek literatures, and its influence is still evident in Afghanistan. A poet of great virtuosity and philosophic bent, he was well acquainted with Indian religions and philosophy. His anti-feudal views and his critical and skeptical attitude toward all kinds of dogma make his poetry relevant even today. His style is difficult, his metaphors and syntax quite complex (though the language itself is quite simple); and yet, as a modern critic puts it, “the intensity of his subjective assessment is so acute and factual, and his metaphysical experience so intense, that genuine poetry emerges in all its splendour.”

Urdu

Earlier varieties of Urdu, variously known as Gujarī, Hindawī, and Dakhani, show more affinity with eastern Punjabi and Haryani than with Khari Boli, which provides the grammatical structure of standard modern Urdu. The reasons for putting together the literary products of these dialects, forming a continuous tradition with those in Urdu, are as follows: first, they share a common milieu, consisting of Ṣūfī and Muslim court culture, increasingly dominated by the life and values of the urban elite; second, they display wholesale acceptance of Perso-Arabic literary traditions, including genres, metres, and rhetoric; third, they show an increasing acceptance of Perso-Arabic grammatical devices and vocabulary; and fourth, they tend to prefer Perso-Arabic forms over indigenous forms for learned usage.

Apart from themes and metaphysics, the influence of Ṣūfī hospices and royal courts can be seen in two practices that were essential to the development of Urdu poetry (and also unique

to the Urdu milieu in the medieval period) and that still exist in modified forms. First, Urdu poets generally chose an *ustād*, or master, just as a Šūfī novice chose a *murshid*, or preceptor, and one's poetic genealogy was always a matter of much pride. Second, poets read poetry in private or semiprivate gatherings, called *mushā'irah*, which displayed hierarchies, status consciousness, and rivalries reminiscent of royal courts.

Urdu literature began to develop in the 16th century, in and around the courts of the Quṭb Shāhī and 'Ādil Shāhī, kings of Golconda and Bījāpur in the Deccan (central India). In the later part of the 17th century, Aurangābād became the centre of Urdu literary activities. There was much movement of the literati and the elite between Delhi and Aurangābād, and it needed only the genius of Walī Aurangābādī, in the early 18th century, to bridge the linguistic gap between Delhi and the Deccan and to persuade the poets of Delhi to take writing in Urdu seriously. In the 18th century, with the migration of poets from Delhi, Lucknow became another important centre of Urdu poetry, though Delhi never lost its prominence.

The first three centuries are dominated by poetry. Urdu prose truly began only in the 19th century, with translations of Persian *dāstāns*, books prepared at the Delhi College and the Fort William College at Calcutta, and later with the writers of the Aligarh movement.

To focus on essential matters, the discussion that follows forgoes a chronological account of the poetry, concentrating instead on characteristics of particular genres and the achievements of the most significant of their practitioners up to 1857. There is one poet, however, who cannot be described as a practitioner of the classical Perso-Arabic traditions adopted by his fellow poets. Naẓīr Akbarābādī, who wrote in the late 18th and early 19th centuries, was a poet of consummate skill who chose to display it in short poems (in various forms) written in the language of popular speech as well as of literature. His themes show similar eclecticism. In his voluminous body of work, there are poems on such diverse topics as popular festivals, the seasons, the vanities of life, erotic pleasures and pursuits, dancing bears, and niggardly merchants. He is a master of the telling detail that immediately brings any event to life. Generally ignored by elitist poets and literary chroniclers of his time, Naẓīr has gained increasing respect and recognition as the first and best poet of the people.

Qasīdahs

Qasīdahs are poems written with a “purpose”—the purpose being worldly gain, in the case of poems praising kings and noblemen, or benefit in the afterworld, in the case of poems praising God, the prophet Muḥammad, and other holy personages. These panegyrics are generally overly long and are written in a highly ornate and hyperbolic style, the poets vying to display their prowess by using as many rhymes and discovering as many associative themes as possible. Because of their style and language they are of special interest to lexicographers. Not much scholarly work has been done on the *qasīdahs* written in the

Deccan, but in northern India a number of poets are regarded highly for their achievements in this genre: in the 18th century, Sawdā and Inshā', and in the 19th, Żawq and Ghālib.

Haju and shahr-āshūb

Less ornate, if not less elaborate, and more edifying are the *haju* (derogatory verses, personal and otherwise) and the *shahr-āshūb* (poems lamenting the decline or destruction of a city). They provide useful information about the mores and morals of the period from the 18th to mid-19th century and truly depict the problems facing the society at large. The poems are not formally restricted to any particular metre or stanza pattern. Sawdā again is one of the more famous names.

Maršiyeh

Maršiyeh means “elegy,” but in Urdu literature it generally means an elegy on the travails of the family and kinsmen of Ḥusayn (grandson of Muḥammad) and their martyrdom in the field of Karbalā, Iraq. These elegies and other lamentatory verses were read at public gatherings, especially during the month of Muḥarram. Although a large number of *maršiyehs* were written in the Deccan and at Delhi, it was in Lucknow, with the patronage of Shī'ite elite and royalty, that *maršiyehs* gained the tenor and magnitude of epic poetry. The two great masters of that 19th-century period were Mīr Anīs and Mīrzā Dabīr, who together established *musaddas* (a six-line stanza with an *aaaa bb* rhyme scheme) as the preferred form for *maršiyehs* and added several new topics and details to the ranks of associated themes, thus carrying the form beyond a simple lament. An interesting aspect of these elegies is that, although the scene and personae are Arab, there is no attempt at verisimilitude: Arab gallants and maidens speak and gesture like the elites of Lucknow. Perhaps this added to the pathos and effectiveness of the poems at public readings.

Mašnavī

Mašnavī was the preferred genre for all descriptive and narrative purposes, for it allows the most freedom (only the lines of each couplet must rhyme). In the Deccan, all major poets wrote at least one long *mašnavī*, but lack of knowledge of the dialect has prevented their full appreciation. Thus, the more famous *mašnavīs* are by later poets of Delhi and Lucknow, such as Mīr, Mīr Ḥasan, Dayā Shankar Nasīm, and Mīrzā Shawq. The topics of descriptive *mašnavīs* range from mundane events of life, hunting trips of kings, and the vagaries of nature's seasons to autobiographical discourses. Narrative *mašnavīs* are considerably longer, running into hundreds of couplets. In the Deccan several poets wrote abridged versions of Persian *mašnavīs*, but many others wrote original compositions utilizing Indian romances as well as the better known Persian and Arabic ones. Apart from the names of the protagonists in the *mašnavīs* inspired by Persian and Arabic poems, all else is always local; the landscape, cityscape, processions, customs and rituals, social values and taboos, even the physical characteristics of the people are totally Indian, though dominantly Muslim and

feudal. Despite their length, these narratives gained much popularity and, at least in northern India, were often read in public places, in much the same way as storytellers told stories. The *maṣnavī* form was also used by some of the Hindi Ṣūfī poets.

Ghazal

For the most part, the history of Urdu poetry in India is the story of Urdu *ghazal*, which has been the favourite of both poets and their audiences in every period. A short lyric, with prosodic requirements of both metre and rhyme, *ghazal* demands great skill and thought from the poet, for its couplet must be a complete semantic entity and fully express a whole, well-integrated poetic experience. Favourite themes are erotic love, Ṣūfī love, and metaphysics. Naturally, Urdu poets began by closely imitating, often even plagiarizing, Persian masters, but later on they spoke in a more authentic voice. They continued, however, to employ a vocabulary of love that owed almost everything to Persian and shared very little with the traditions of lyrical poetry in other Indian languages. For example, with few exceptions, the lover is always masculine; expression of love is never made by a woman. Unique, too, is the use of masculine grammatical forms and imagery for the beloved, even when, in every other way, the poem is clearly celebrating heterosexual love. This peculiarity, as well as other traditions borrowed from Persian masters, gives a *ghazal* couplet a tremendously wide range of interpretations. It is amazing indeed what a master poet can condense into one terse couplet.

The two greatest *ghazal* writers in Urdu are Mīr Taqī Mīr, in the 18th century, and Mīrzā Asadullāh Khān Ghālib, in the 19th. They are in some ways diametrical opposites. The first prefers either very long metres or very short, employs a simple, non-Persianized language, and restricts himself to affairs of the heart. The other writes in metres of moderate length, uses a highly Persianized vocabulary, and ranges wide in ideas. Mīr speaks of passion and pathos; Ghālib betrays a skeptic's mind and leaves nothing unquestioned, not even his feelings. But both have left indelible marks on the ideas and emotions of succeeding generations. Ghālib wrote poetry in Persian as well as Urdu and also published a couple of volumes of letters in Urdu that helped usher in modern prose. In many ways he bridges the gap separating the medieval sensibility from the modern. The contemporary mind, however, is also moved by the authentic passion of Mīr, idolizing him for the sublimity of his concept of love and for his personal integrity. The poems of Ghālib and Mīr represent the best of the Urdu *ghazal*; and the Urdu *ghazal*, as an anonymous wit has remarked, is the Muslims' greatest gift to India, after the Tāj Mahal.

C.M. Naim

Sinhalese literature: 10th century AD to 19th century

The island nation of Ceylon (now called Sri Lanka), formally a part of South Asia, has been little noticed by the subcontinent, apart from the fact that according to an uncertain

tradition it is celebrated in the *Rāmāyaṇa* as the island called *Laññā*. Buddhist sway was introduced there early, during the reign of Aśoka Maurya (c. 269–232 BC); and, while on the subcontinent Buddhism prospered, declined, and finally disappeared, in Ceylon it has continued until today. Although there are obvious borrowings in Ceylon from subcontinental literature, notably Sanskrit, and there was rather precarious communication with India through the island's Hindu community of Tamils, Ceylon never became culturally continuous with the mainland. The language itself, although of Indo-Aryan stock, is strongly mixed with a substratum of Dravidian. Also, it was Ceylon's fate early to fall victim to European colonialism, first to the Portuguese, then to the Dutch, and finally to the British, before it regained nationhood in 1948.

While there are inscriptions that antedate the Christian Era, no texts appear to survive from before the 10th century AD. The first texts that emerged were aids in Sinhalese—glossaries, paraphrases, and the like—to the study of the Pāli texts of Buddhism. More interesting are Sinhalese renderings of the life and virtues of the Buddha. Important in this genre, hagiographic rather than literary, is the *Amāvatura* (“Flood of the Ambrosia”), by Guruḷugōmī, which in 18 chapters purports to narrate the life of the Buddha, with specific emphasis on one of his nine virtues—his capacity to tame recalcitrant people or forces. In a similar vein is the literature of devotion and counsel, in which Buddhist virtues are celebrated.

Exceptional in the context of the South Asian subcontinent is the early and persistent interest in historical records. Such interest had begun in Pāli with the *Dīpavaṃsa* (“Chronicle of the Island”) and had continued with the *Mahāvaṃsa* (“Great Chronicle”) and *Cūlavaṃsa* (“Lesser Chronicle”), but it had a life of its own in Sinhalese. The most important, and possibly the oldest, of such chronicles is the *Thūpavaṃsaya* (“Chronicle of the Great Stupa”), by Pārakrama Paṇḍita. Subsequent chronicles, or genealogies of places, comprise the history of all of the major Buddhist monuments. Several chronicles were also inspired by the Tooth Relic, received from Kaliṅga in the 4th century by King Kīrtiśrīmēghavarṇa. Such chronicling included that of the kings who protected the relic.

All of this literature was mostly in prose, but poetry as a literary form no doubt antedated it, as evidenced by early inscriptions. Much poetry was occasioned by Pāli *Jātakas* (stories of the Buddha's previous births) and other Buddhist stories, though Hindu stories were not lacking; for example, a version of the Sanskrit *Mahābhārata* (received through a Tamil source) was cast in the style of a *Jātaka* in the *Mahāpadaraṅga-Jatakaya*.

Likewise of Hindu Indian origin was a genre that took off from the Sanskrit poet Kālidāsa's “Meghadūta” (see above Classical Sanskrit kāvya [200–1200]), in which an exiled lover sends a message to his beloved by way of a monsoon cloud, thus giving the poet the opportunity to dwell on the description of landmarks in a poetic travelogue. This genre, so-called *saṃdeśa* literature, by no means unknown on the mainland, proliferated widely on Ceylon.

Of a different style are panegyrics and war poems, the earliest of which is the *Parakumbasirita* ("History of Parakramabahu VI," king in Jayavardhanapura from 1410 to 1468). Again reminiscent of the mainland and the religious tradition are the plentiful eulogies of the Buddha. Popular, too, was didactic verse, among the most notable of which is the *Kusajātaka*, 687 stanzas of epigrams and exempla by the 17th-century poet Alagiyavanna Mohoṭṭāla.

Modern period: 19th and 20th centuries

The modern period was ushered in by the arrival of the British, the influence of Western models becoming discernible in the early 19th century. Reform-minded Hindus, led by Ram Mohun Roy, took a positive attitude to Western literature and urged on their countrymen a Western type of education. Newly formed literary clubs spread the influence of predominantly British works, thereby opening the Indian educated elite to Western culture and literature in general. After a period of translation, authors sought to imitate Western models and eventually to be independently creative in the new styles.

The most striking result of Westernization was the introduction of prose on a major scale. Vernacular prose, rarely looked upon previously as a medium for art, was now used as a literary vehicle, and such hitherto unknown forms as the novel, novella, and short story began to emerge. In poetry the thrall of tradition was stronger, and verse in the older forms continued to be written. With modernity, realism appeared, as well as symbolism in some quarters, and there was new psychological and social interest.

From Bengal spread a new sense of national purpose, which became the principal motivation for much English as well as vernacular literature. Three trends can be distinguished in the products of this increasing literary activity. The old traditionalism was transformed into romanticism, which looked to the past, to Indian history, for inspiration and sought to preserve what was considered valuable in the past; a tendency to mysticism went hand in hand with the romantic mood (a mood that was also widespread in 19th-century Europe). Greater social awareness in European literature was reflected in the literature of Indian progressives, in whose works a somewhat romantic Marxism prevailed. Finally, there was a humanistic trend. The teachings of Mahatma Gandhi, combining social concerns with traditional ethics, later exerted a very great influence on literature.

In the years preceding and following India's independence (1947) and control of the princely states, the fervour of writers sometimes turned to an increasingly articulate progressivism of various Marxist schools, sometimes to disappointment and bitterness, and most recently, it appears, to a mood of introspection. These developments, which occurred with a different pace in different regions, are described briefly below. A complete coverage of the most modern literature has not been attempted, but an endeavour has been made to mention persons who are considered to be representative.

Bengali

Except for the iconoclastic poet Michael Madhusudan Datta, poetic activity in the mid-19th century was giving ground to experimentation with the new prose style learned from English. During this period, Bengali literature produced a spate of novels—satiric, social, and picaresque. While Michael's work *Mēghanādhavadh* (1861; a long poem on the Rāma theme in which Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa become the villains and Rāvaṇa the hero) caused a stir, the literary event of the period was the appearance on the scene of Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, whose first novel, *Durgesānandīnī* ("Daughter of the Lord of the Fort"), appeared in 1865. While not at first overtly nationalist, Bankim Chandra became more and more an apologist for the Hindu position. In *Kṛṣṇacaritra*, Christ suffers in comparison with Krishna, and in his best known work, *Ānanda-maṭh* (1892; "The Abbey of Bliss"), the motherland in the person of the goddess Durgā is extolled.

Perhaps first among novelists of the late 19th and early 20th centuries is Saratchandra Chatterjee, whose social concerns with the family and other homely issues made his work popular. But the early 20th century is certainly best known for the poet who towers head and shoulders above the rest, Rabindranath Tagore. Poet, playwright, novelist, painter, essayist, musician, social reformer, Rabindranath produced works, still not completely collected, that fill 26 substantial volumes. The winner of the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1913, primarily for his little book of songs called *Gitāñjali*, which was much praised by Ezra Pound and William Butler Yeats, Tagore is more known for these devotional poems than for the wit and clear thought with which his later work is filled. He was the last of an era, looking back as he did to the religious and political history of Bengal for his inspiration. Those who followed him were more concerned with introspection and dramatic imagery.

If Tagore was the last poet in the Bengali tradition, Jibanananda Das was the first of a new breed. Musing and melancholy, yet known for vivid and unusual imagery Jibanananda is a poet who has much influence on younger writers in Bengal. There have been many other poets in the 20th century who are equally powerful but stand somewhat apart from the mainstream. One of these was Sudhindranath Datta, a poet much like Pound in careful and etymological use of language; another is the poet and prose writer Buddhadeva Bose.

Bose has been termed a progressive, and indeed he consciously turned away from the tradition orientation of Tagore and sought inspiration in schools foreign to Bengal—for example, the French Symbolists. He is the leader of an artistic faction, the Kallol school, and editor of an influential literary magazine, *Kavitā*. Unjustifiably called obscene, his writing has been experimental, probing into social and psychological realities of Bengali life.

While there have been, and still are, literary factions associated with political positions, they have been less definitive than some in other parts of India. Bengali writers in the 20th century have tended to be personal and individual rather than propagandist for political positions.

Assamese

Assamese literature began with Hemchandra Baruwa, a satirist and playwright, author of the play *Bahiri-Rang-Chang Bhitare Kowabhaturi* (1861; “All That Glitters Is Not Gold”). The most outstanding among the early modern writers was Lakshminath Bezbaruwa, who founded a literary monthly, *Jōnāki* (“Moonlight”), in 1889, and was responsible for infusing Assamese letters with 19th-century Romanticism. Later 20th-century writers have tried to remain faithful to the ideals of *Jōnāki*. The short story in particular has flourished in the language; notable practitioners are Mahichandra Bora and Holiram Deka.

The year 1940 marked a shift toward psychology, but World War II effectively put an end to literary development. When writers resumed after the war, there was a clear break with the past, in experimental verse and the growth of the novel form.

Hindi

Modern Hindi literature began with Harishchandra in poetry and drama, Mahavir Prasad Dvivedi in criticism and other prose writings, and Prem Chand in fiction. This period, the second half of the 19th century, saw mainly translations from Sanskrit, Bengali, and English. The growth of nationalism and social reform movements of the Arya Samaj led to the composition of long narrative poems, exemplified by those of Maithili Sharan Gupta; dramas, by those of Jayashankar Prasad; and historical novels, by those of Prasad, Chatureen Shastri, and Vrindavan Lal Varma. The novels drew mainly on the periods of the Maurya, Gupta, and Mughal empires.

This period was followed by the Non-cooperation and *satyāgraha* movements of Mahatma Gandhi, which inspired poets such as Makhan Lal Chaturvedi, Gupta, and Subhadra Chauhan and novelists such as Prem Chand and Jainendra Kumar. Eventual disillusionment with Gandhian experiments and the increasing influence of Marxism on European literature influenced writers such as Yashpal, Rangeya Raghava, and Nagarjuna.

S.N. Pant, Prasad, Nirala, and Mahadevi Varma, the most creative poets of the 1930s, drew inspiration from the Romantic tradition in English and Bengali poetry and the mystic tradition of medieval Hindi poetry. Reacting against them were the Marxist poets Ram Vilas Sharma and Nagarjuna and experimentalists such as H.S. Vatsyayan “Agyeya” and Bharat Bhuti Agarwal. Nirala, who developed from a mystic-romantic into a realist and experimentalist, was the most outstanding poet of the 1950s; and Sarweshwar Dayal Saxena, Kailash Vajpeyi, and Raghubir Sahay were the most creative poets of the 1960s.

Two trends, represented by the work of Prem Chand and Jainendra Kumar, led Hindi fiction in two different directions: while social realists like Yashpal, Upendranath Ashk, Amritlal Nagar, Mohan Rakesh, Rajendra Yadav, Kamleshwar, Nagarjuna, and Renu faithfully analyzed the changing patterns of Indian society, writers such as Ila Chandra Joshi,

“Agyeya,” Dharm Vir Bharati, and Shrikant Varma explored the psychology of the individual, not necessarily within the Indian context.

Among the dramatists of the 1930s and 1940s were Govind Ballabh Pant and Seth Govind Das; because of their highly Sanskritized language, their plays have had a limited audience. Plays by minor writers such as Ramesh Mehta, however, are repeatedly staged by professional theatres. In between these extremes there are some notable playwrights.

Gujarati

In Gujarāt, too, the advent of British rule deeply influenced the literary scene. The year 1886 saw the *Kusumamālā* (“Garland of Flowers”), a collection of lyrics by Narsingh Rao. Other poets include Kalapi, Kant, and especially Nanalal, who experimented in free verse and was the first poet to eulogize Gandhi. Gandhi, himself a Gujarati, admonished poets to write for the masses and thus inaugurated a period of poetic concern with changes in the social order. Many incidents in Gandhi’s life inspired the songs of poets. The Gandhi period in Gujarāt as elsewhere gave way to a period of progressivism in the class-conflict poetry of R.L. Meghani and Bhogilal Gandhi. In post-independence India, poetry has tended to become subjectivist and alienated without, however, fully superseding the traditional verse of devotion to God and love of nature.

Among novelists, Govardhanram stands out; his *Sarasvatīchandra* is a classic, the first social novel. In the novel form, too, the influence of Gandhism is clearly felt, though not in the person of Kanaiyalal Munshi, who was critical of Gandhian ideology but still, in several *Purāṇa*-inspired works, tended to preach much the same message. In the period after independence the modernists embraced existentialistic, surrealist, and symbolistic trends and gave voice to the same kind of alienation as the poets.

Marathi

The modern period in Marathi poetry began with Kesavasut and was influenced by 19th-century British Romanticism and liberalism, European nationalism, and the greatness of the history of Mahārāshtra. Kesavasut declared a revolt against traditional Marathi poetry and started a school, lasting until 1920, that emphasized home and nature, the glorious past, and pure lyricism. After that, the period was dominated by a group of poets called the Ravikiran Maṇḍal, who proclaimed that poetry was not for the erudite and sensitive but was instead a part of everyday life. Contemporary poetry, after 1945, seeks to explore man and his life in all its variety; it is subjective and personal and tries to speak colloquially.

Among modern dramatists, S.K. Kolhatkar and R.G. Gadkari are notable. Realism was first brought to the stage in the 20th century, by Mama Varerkar, who tried to interpret many social problems.

The *Madhalī Sthiti* (1885; “Middle State”), of Hari Narayan Apte, began the novel tradition in Marathi; the work’s message was one of social reform. A high place is held by V.M. Joshi, who explored the education and evolution of a woman (*Suśīlā-cha Diva*, 1930) and the relation between art and morals (*Indu Kāḷe va Saralā Bhoḷe*, 1935). Important after 1925 were N.S. Phadke, who advocated art for art’s sake, and V.S. Khandekar, who countered the former with an idealistic art for life’s sake. Noteworthy contemporary novelists are S.N. Pendse, V.V. Shirwadkar, G.N. Dandekar, and Ranjit Desai.

Punjabi

Modern Punjabi literature began around 1860. A number of trends in modern poetry can be discerned. To the more traditional genres of narrative poetry, mystic verse, and love poems was added nationalist poetry in a humorous or satiric mood and experimental verse. Among the more important Punjabi poets are Bhai Vir Singh, in the 19th century, and Purana Singh, Amrita Pritam, and Baba Balwanta, in the 20th century.

Modern prose is represented by Bhai Vira Singha, Charana Singha, and Nanaka Singha, all of whom wrote novels; the same writers, as well as Gurbhaksh Singh and Devendra Satyarathi, also wrote short stories. Among playwrights mention may be made of I.C. Nanda, Harcharan Singh, and Santa Singh Sekhon.

Rajasthani

It is generally agreed that modern Rajasthani literature began with the works of Suryamal Misrama. His most important works are the *Vamsa Bhaskara* and the *Vira satsaī*. The *Vamsa Bhaskara* contains accounts of the Rājput princes who ruled in what was then Rājputāna (at present the state of Rājasthān), during the lifetime of the poet (1872–1952). The *Vira satsaī* is a collection of couplets dealing with historical heroes. Two other important poets in this traditional style are Bakhtavara Ji and Kaviraja Muraridana.

The period of nationalist strife against the British inspired a number of poets to verse that was both nationalist and in the traditional heroic vein; among them are Hiralala Sastri, Manikyalala Varma, and Jayanarayana Vyasa. This period was followed by one in which progressive social ideals inspired such poets as Ganeshilala Vyasa, Murlidhara Vyasa, and Satyaprakasha Jodhi.

Primarily known for their lyrics are Kanhaya Lal Sethiya and Megharaja Mukula, among others, and known for their narrative poems are Manohara Sharma, Shrimanta Kumara, and Naraina Singha Bhati.

Modern prose is represented in the novel, short story, and play. Among the novelists are Shiva Candra Bharatiya, Shri Lal Jodhi, Vijaya Dana Detha, and Yadavendra Sharma Chandra; the short-story writers are Rani Lakshmi Kumari Chandavata, Narasingh Rajapurohita, Dinadayala Ojha, and Purushottama Lala Menariya. Vijaya Dana Detha and

Rani Lakshmi Kumari Chandavata are also known for their retelling of Rajasthani folktales. Among the playwrights is Shivachandra Bharatiya.

Tamil

In the second half of the 19th century two tendencies were present in Tamil literature. One was the old traditional prose style of the *Patineṇ-kīlkkanaṅku*, or “Eighteen Ethical Works” (see above Dravidian literature: 1st–19th century), learned and severely scholastic; among others, V.V. Svaminatha Iyer and Arumuga Navalar wrote in this style. Another tendency, begun by Aruṇācala Kavirāyar in the 18th century, sought to bring the spoken and written languages together. This tendency developed on one side into such works as the operatic play *Nantaṇār Carittarak Kīrttaṇai* by Gopalakrishna, and on the other into ballads, often based on the lore of the Sanskrit *Purāṇas*. Despite attempts to effect a synthesis between the two languages, however, the scholastic style has continued to have a profound influence on modern Tamil literature; the normal spoken language, in fact, never became a literary medium.

The first novel in Tamil appeared in 1879, the *Piratāpamutaliyār Carittiram*, by Vetanayakam Pillai, who was inspired by English and French novels. In important respects Pillai’s work is typical of all early modern Tamil fiction: his subject matter is Tamil life as he observed it, the language is scholastic, and the inspiration comes from foreign sources. Not strictly a novel, his work, which has a predominantly moral tone, is a loosely gathered string of narratives centred around an innocent hero.

Quite different is the *Kamalāmpāl Carittiram* (“The Fatal Rumor”), by Rajam Aiyar, whom many judge to be the most important prose writer of 19th-century Tamil literature. In this work, the author created a series of characters that appear to have become classics; the story is a romance, yet life in rural Tamil country is treated very realistically, with humour, irony, and social satire. In language Aiyar follows the classical style, which he intermixes with informal conversation, a style that has been imitated by modern authors.

The turn of the century saw the development of the *centamiḷ* style, which in many respects is a continuation of the medieval commentatorial style. The best representative is V.V. Swaminathan, who also is responsible for the rediscovery of the Tamil classical legacy, usually called “Tamil Renaissance,” which tended to direct the mood of writers back to the glorious past. The pride in Tamil subsequently gave rise to a purist tradition and a second style, called *tuyattamiḷ*, or “pure Tamil.” With exaggerated Tamilian self-consciousness, the language was purged of all non-Tamil loanwords, particularly Sanskrit, which removed the literary language even further from the spoken one. This style was not ineffective in verse but led easily to rhetoric.

The purist trend brought forth a reaction in *putumaṇipravāla naṭai*, “the new *maṇipravāla*” (see above Dravidian literature: 1st–19th century), which was Sanskritized with a vengeance

and is of little literary interest.

The scholastic and formalist character of Tamil prose was predominant in the literature until the advent, in the early 20th century, of the poet and prose writer Subrahmanya Bharati. Bharati sought to synthesize the popular and the scholastic traditions of Tamil literature, and he created thereby a Tamil that was amenable to all literary expression. This synthesis, however, did not extend to the literary language itself, which in grammar continued the formal language, though for syntax, vocabulary, etc., he drew upon colloquial speech. In doing so he saved the language from the Sanskrit tradition of *Purāṇa* writing. His style is the *maṛumaḷarcci naṭai*, the “renaissance style.”

In the first half of the 20th century, R. Krishnamurthy was an immensely popular writer. Under the pseudonym Kalki, he was an influential journalist who wrote voluminous historical romances.

In the 1930s there was a literary movement inspired by a journal called *Manikkoti*. Writers in this movement contributed extremely important new works, both in verse and prose, to Tamil letters. Among them was Putumaippittan, who wrote realistically, critically, and even bitterly about the failings of society.

Contemporary literature is represented by T. Janakiraman, who writes novels, short stories, and plays with themes from urban Tamil middle-class family life; Jayakanthan, a sharp and passionate writer, with a tendency to shock his readers; and L.S. Ramatirthan, probably the finest stylist at work in Tamil today, who started by writing in English.

Malayalam

In Malayalam the modern movement began in the late 19th century with Asan, who was temperamentally a pessimist—a disposition reinforced by his metaphysics—yet all his life was active in promoting his downtrodden Ezhava community. Ullor wrote in the classical tradition, on the basis of which he appealed for universal love, while Vallathol (died 1958) responded to the human significance of social progress.

Contemporary poetry records the encounter with problems of social, political, and economic life. The tendency is toward political radicalism.

Drama, native in Malayalam tradition, emerged in the modern period as farce, comedy, and satire but turned in the 1920s to a more sombre appraisal of outdated social conventions. The novel dates back to the late 1880s and was early concerned with social realism. At present the general tendency is introspective.

Kannada

Modern Kannada poetry emerged about the beginning of the 20th century and showed a spirit of national purpose that pervaded other literature as well. By 1920, after major

translations from Western models had been published, new literary forms such as the lyric and the short story came to the fore in the works of Panje Mangesh Rao and B.M. Srikantiah. Other prominent Kannada writers were D.V.G. Masti, Govinda Pai, and K.V. Puttappa (“Kuvempu”). In recent years a modernist movement has influenced the literature.

Urdu

The modern period in Urdu literature coincides with the mid-19th-century emergence of a middle class that saw in Western thought and science a means to needed social reform. Naẓīr Aḥmad wrote novels about the conflicts of Muslim middle class people. Shiblī, a poet and critic, wrote on the lives of great Muslims. The more famous novelists of the later period are Ratan-Nāth Sharshār, ‘Abd-ul-Ḥalīm Sharar, and Mīrzā Ruswā. The fathers of modern Urdu poetry were Ḥālī and Muḥammad Ḥusayn Āzād, the latter particularly characterized by a fine sensitivity for the past.

The greatest modern poet is Iqbāl. Writing in the early 20th century, he was influenced by the general sense of national purpose and the freedom movement. His poetic imagery, the power of his expression, and his philosophical outlook won the admiration of his fellow Muslims. In prose the most important writer of short stories was Prem Chand, who late in his career took to writing in Hindi. The 1930s saw the influence of progressivism, which attempted to make literature an arm of social revolution. Among the representative writers of this period are Sajjad Zahir, Upendranath Ashk, and Ismat Chughtai, the last a woman who is considered among the best.

English

There has been Indian literary activity in English for the last 200 years. It began with the insistence of the reformist Rammohan Ray and other like-minded Hindus that, for India to take its rightful place among nations, a knowledge of and education in English were essential. English literary activity took on a new aspect with the independence movement, whose leaders and followers found in English the one language that united them.

Among the first poets were Henry Derozio, Kashiprasad Ghose, and Michael Madhusudan Datta, all of whom wrote narrative verse. In the following generation there was Toru Dutt, important among women poets in this genre. Carrying on her work was Sarojini Naidu, judged by many the greatest of women poets; among her writings are *The Golden Threshold* (1905), *The Bird of Time* (1912), and *The Broken Wing* (1917). Best known of the Indian poets in English was the Bengali Rabindranath Tagore (see above Bengali), who, however, wrote most of his verse first in Bengali, and then translated it. A very different figure from Tagore is Sri Aurobindo, who started out as an ardent nationalist and was jailed by the British. After his conversion from activism to introspection, which took place in jail, he established a hermitage in Pondicherry. He left behind a rich *oeuvre* of verse that has inspired a

contemporary school of mystic poets. Other modern poets show the influence of T.S. Eliot and Ezra Pound.

The independence movement gave strong impetus to expository prose. Important contributors to this genre were Bal Gangadhar Tilak, who edited the English journal *Mahratta*, Lala Lajpat Rai, Kasturi Ranga Iyengar, and T. Prakasam. Mahatma Gandhi, too, wrote widely in English and edited *Young India* and the *Harijan*. He also wrote the autobiography *My Experiments with Truth* (originally published in Gujarati, 1927–29), now an Indian classic. In this he was followed by Jawaharlal Nehru, whose *Discovery of India* is justly popular.

Prose fiction in English began in 1902 with the novel *The Lake of Palms*, by Romesh Chunder Dutt. The next important novelist is Mulk Raj Anand, who fulminated against class and caste distinction in a series of novels, *The Coolie* (1936), *Untouchable* (1935), *Two Leaves and a Bud* (1937), and *The Big Heart* (1945). Less fierce, though a better craftsman, is R.K. Narayan, who has published nine novels (as well as many short stories), among them *The Guide* (1958), *The Man-Eater of Malgudi* (1961), and *The Vendor of Sweets* (1967); his work has a wider circle of readers outside India than within. Other Indian novelists in the English medium are Santha Rama Rau, Manohar Malgonkar, Kamala Markandeya, and Khushwant Singh. The most popular is Raja Rao, whose novels *Kanthapura* (1938), *The Cow of the Barricades* (1947), and *The Serpent and the Rope* have attracted a wide following.

Sinhalese

Traditional contemporary poetry continues to be Buddhist in subject matter and sentiment. A more modern literature arose under the influence of Western models; notable among the contemporary representatives of Sinhalese literature are Kumaranatunga, a critic, Matin Wickremasinghe, a novelist, and Tennakoon, a poet.

J.A.B. van Buitenen

Music

Folk, classical, and popular music

The wide field of musical phenomena in South Asia ranges from the relatively straightforward two- or three-tone melodies of some of the hill tribes in central India to the highly cultivated art music heard in concert halls in the large cities. This variety reflects the heterogeneous population of the subcontinent in terms of ethnic heritage, religion, language, and social status.

Rural areas

In the villages, music is not just a form of entertainment but is an essential element in many of the activities of daily life and plays a prominent part in most rituals. These include life-

cycle events, such as birth, initiation, marriage, and death; events of the agricultural cycle, such as planting, transplanting, harvesting, and threshing; and a variety of work songs. Much of this music could be described as functional, for it serves a utilitarian purpose; for instance, a harvest song might well give thanks to God for a bountiful harvest, but underlying this is the idea that singing this song in its traditional manner will help to ensure that the next harvest will be equally fruitful. These songs are usually sung by all the members participating in the activity and are sung not for a human audience but for a spiritual one. They are often sung in the form of leader and chorus, and the musical accompaniment, if any, is generally provided by drone instruments (those sustaining or reiterating a given note or notes), usually of the lute family, or percussion instruments, such as drums, clappers, and pairs of cymbals. Occasionally, a fiddle or flute might also accompany the singers, who often dance while they sing.

In each area and even within a single area, different social groups have their own individual songs whose origins are lost in antiquity. The songs are passed on from one generation to another, and in most cases the composers are unknown. Apart from folk songs, one also hears outdoor instrumental music in villages. The music is provided by an ensemble of varying size, which consists basically of an oboe type of instrument (usually a *shehnai* in North India and *nagaswaram* in the south) and a variety of drums. Sometimes straight, curved, or S-shaped horns may be added. These groups play at weddings, funerals, and religious processions. The musicians are professional or semiprofessional and usually belong to a very low caste. Such ensembles are found in tribal and other predominantly rural societies as well as in villages and cities.

Other professional music is also found in the rural regions. Most areas are visited by religious mendicants, many of whom travel around the countryside singing devotional songs, accompanying themselves either with a one-, two-, or three-stringed lute that generally provides only a drone or with a frame (tambourine-like) drum. They carry with them a small begging bowl and maintain themselves entirely on what they receive in alms. There are also itinerant magicians, snake charmers, acrobats, and storytellers who travel in the rural areas. Music is often involved in their acts, and the storyteller generally sings his tales, which may be taken from the two epics, the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana*, or from the Puranas, the legends that describe the adventures of the incarnations of God as they rid the world of evil. Sometimes the narrative songs are concerned with historical characters and describe the wars and the heroic deeds of the regional rulers. Some storytellers specialize in generally tragic stories of romance and of lovers.

During certain religious festivals, the villages might be visited by a travelling band of players who enact some of the mythological episodes connected with the festival. Such performances are accompanied by music and may also include dances. During the festivals villagers may visit neighbourhood shrines or temples, there encountering religious mendicants singing devotional songs and perhaps watching elaborate enactments of the episodes connected with the festival. Thus, the villagers become familiar with the

mythological and philosophical aspects of their religion, in spite of low levels of literacy in many rural areas and the difficulties of communication via the overland infrastructure, which may be limited to a narrow dirt road traversed by bullock carts.

Especially since the mid-20th century, there has been considerable interaction between rural and urban cultures. Travelling cinemas, set up quickly and easily in tents, have visited the rural areas for many years, not only bringing Western-influenced film music—the source of most Indian popular songs—but also contributing to changing musical tastes and aesthetics across the countryside. Conversely, film music and other popular genres, such as the now ubiquitous *bhangra* music, have clearly been inspired by rural traditions. Although many distinct rural and urban musics continue to be practiced in the 21st century, the traditions are increasingly intertwined.

Classical music

Many different forms of music can be heard in the cities. Of these, best known in the West are the classical music of North India (including Pakistan), also called Hindustani music, and that of South India, also called Karnatak music. Both classical systems are supported by an extensive body of literature and elaborate musical theory. Until modern times, classical music was patronized by the princely courts and to some extent also by wealthy noblemen. Since India gained independence in 1947, and with the abolition of the princely kingdoms, the emphasis has shifted to the milieu of large concert halls. The concertgoer, radio, and the cinema are now the main patrons of the classical musicians. Meanwhile, the growth of university music programs, particularly involving classical music, has placed greater emphasis on music history and theory and has provided a further source of income for musicologists and musicians. The traditional system of private instruction, however, still continues to this day.

Classical music is based on two main elements, *raga* and *tala*. The word *raga* is derived from a Sanskrit root meaning “to colour,” the underlying idea being that certain melodic shapes, involving specific intervals of the scale, produce a continuity of emotional experience and “colour” the mind. Since neither the melodic shapes nor their sequence are fixed precisely, a *raga* serves as a basis for composition and improvisation. Indian music has neither modulation (change of key) nor changing harmonies; instead, the music is invariably accompanied by a drone that establishes the tonic, or ground note, of the *raga* and usually its fifth (i.e., five notes above). These are chosen to suit the convenience of the main performer, as there is no concept of fixed pitch. While a *raga* is primarily a musical concept, specific *ragas*, particularly in North Indian music, possess a number of nonsonic elements in their association with particular periods of the day, seasons of the year, colours, deities, and specific moods.

The second element of Indian music, *tala*, is best described as time measure and has two main constituents; the duration of the time measure in terms of time units that vary

according to the tempo chosen; and the distribution of stress within the time measure. Tala, like raga, serves as a basis for composition and improvisation.

Indian classical music is generally performed by small ensembles of not more than five or six musicians. Improvisation plays a major part in a performance, and great emphasis is placed on the creativity and sensitivity of the soloist. A performance of a raga usually goes through well-defined stages, beginning with an improvised melodic prelude that is followed by a composed piece set in a particular time measure. The composition is generally quite short and serves as a frame of reference to which the soloist returns at the conclusion of his improvisation. There is no set duration for the performance of a raga. A characteristic feature of North Indian classical music is the gradual acceleration of tempo, which leads to a final climax.

Nonclassical music of the cities

Classical music interests only a small proportion of the peoples of South Asia, even in the cities. Since about the 1930s a new genre, associated with the cinema, has achieved extraordinary popularity. Most Indian films are very much like Western musicals and generally include six or more songs. Film music derives its inspiration from a number of sources, both Indian and Western; classical, folk, and devotional music are the main Indian sources, while Western influence is seen most obviously in the use of large orchestras that employ both Western and Indian instruments. The influence of Western popular music, too, is very evident. In spite of the eclectic nature of Indian film music, most of the songs maintain an Indian feeling that arises largely from the vocal technique of the singers and the ornamentation of the melody line. This music is a continuously developing form, and much of it has incorporated harmony, counterpoint, and other features of Western music. But the film music differs from typical Western music in that the melody line is generally not dictated by harmonic progressions and in that the harmonies used are incidental additions.

Aside from classical and film music, there are several other forms of urban music, some of which closely resemble the music of the rural areas. In city streets one is likely to encounter an outdoor band of oboes and drums announcing a wedding or a funeral. Street musicians, religious mendicants, snake charmers, storytellers, and magicians perform at every available opportunity, and work songs are sung by construction workers and other labourers. In private homes, still other forms of music are performed, ranging from religious chanting to traditional folk and devotional songs. In public places of entertainment, the listener may encounter, apart from classical and film music, theatrical music from one of the many forms of regional theatre. In the lowbrow places of entertainment, courtesans still sing and dance in traditional fashion. In the larger cities there are performances of Western chamber music and occasionally symphony concerts, as well as popular dance music, rock, and jazz in the night clubs.

Antiquity

In a musical tradition in which improvisation predominates, and written notation, when used, is skeletal and more a tool of the theorist than of the practicing musician, the music of past generations is irrevocably lost. References to music in ancient texts, aesthetic formulations, and depictions and written discussions of musical instruments can offer clues. In rare instances an ancient musical style may be preserved in unbroken oral tradition. For most historical eras and styles, surviving treatises explaining musical scales and modes—the framework of melody—provide a particularly important means of recapturing at least a suggestion of the music of former times, and tracing the musical theory of the past makes clear the position of the present musical system.

Little is known of the musical culture of the Indus valley civilization of the 3rd and 2nd millennia BCE. Some musical instruments, such as the arched, or bow-shaped, harp and more than one variety of drum, have been identified from the small terra-cotta figures and among the pictographs on the seals that were probably used by merchants. Further, it has been suggested that a bronze statuette of a dancing girl represents a class of temple dancers similar to those found much later in Hindu culture. It is known that the Indus civilization had established trade connections with the Mesopotamian civilizations, so that it is possible that the bow harp found in Sumer would also have been known in the Indus valley.

Vedic chant

Compilation of hymns

It is generally thought among scholars that the Indus valley civilization was terminated by the arrival of bands of semi-nomadic tribesmen, the Aryans, who descended into India from the northwest, probably in the first half of the 2nd millennium BCE. An important aspect of Aryan religious life was the bard-priest who composed hymns in praise of gods, to be sung or chanted at sacrifices. This tradition was continued in the invaders' new home in northern India until a sizable body of oral religious poetry had been composed. By about 1000 BCE this body of chanted poetry had apparently grown to unmanageable proportions, and the best of the poems were formed into an anthology called Rigveda, which was then canonized. It was not committed to writing, but text and chanting formula were carefully handed down by word of mouth from one generation to the next, up to the present period.

The poems in the Rigveda are arranged according to the priestly families who used and, presumably, had composed the hymns. Shortly after this a new Veda, called the Yajurveda, basically a methodical rearrangement of the verses of the Rigveda with certain additions in prose, was created to serve as a kind of manual for the priest officiating at the sacrifices. At approximately the same time, a third Veda, the Samaveda, was created for liturgical purposes. The Samaveda was also derived from the hymns of the Rigveda, but the words were distorted by the repetition of syllables, pauses, prolongations, and phonetic changes, as well as the insertion of certain meaningless syllables believed to have magical significance. A fourth Veda, the Atharvaveda, was accepted as a Veda considerably later and is quite

unrelated to the other three. It represents the more popular aspects of the Vedic religion and consists mostly of magic spells and incantations.

Each of these Vedas has several ancillary texts, called the Brahmanas, Aranyakas, and Upanishads, which are also regarded as part of the Vedas. These ancillary texts are concerned primarily with mystical speculations, symbolism, and the cosmological significance of the sacrifice. The Vedic literature was oral and not written down until very much later, the first reference to a written Vedic text being in the 10th century CE. In order to ensure the purity of the Vedas, the slightest change was forbidden, and the priests devised systems of checks and counterchecks so that there has been virtually no change in these texts for about 3,000 years. Underlying this was the belief that the correct recitation of the Vedas was “the pivot of the universe” and that the slightest mistake would have disastrous cosmic consequence unless expiated by sacrifice and prayer. The Vedas are still chanted by the Brahman priests at weddings, initiations, funerals, and the like, in the daily devotions of the priests, and at the now rarely held so-called public sacrifices.

From the Vedic literature it is apparent that music played an important part in the lives of the Aryan peoples, and there are references to stringed instruments, wind instruments, and several types of drums and cymbals. Songs, instrumental music, and dance are mentioned as being an integral part of some of the sacrificial ceremonies. The bow harp (*vina*), a stringed instrument (probably a board zither) with 100 strings, and the bamboo flute were the most prominent melody instruments. Little is known of the music, however, apart from the Vedic chanting, which can still be heard today.

Chant intonation

The chanting of the Rigveda and Yajurveda shows, with some exceptions, a direct correlation with the grammar of the Vedic language. As in ancient Greek, the original Vedic language was accented, with the location of the accent often having a bearing on the meaning of the word. In the development of the Vedic language to Classical Sanskrit, the original accent was replaced by an automatic stress accent, whose location was determined by the length of the word and had no bearing on its meaning. It was thus imperative that the location of the original accent be inviolate if the Vedic texts were to be preserved accurately. The original Vedic accent occurs as a three-syllable pattern: the central syllable, called *udatta*, receives the main accent; the preceding syllable, *anudatta*, is a kind of preparation for the accent; and the following syllable, *svarita*, is a kind of return from accentuation to accentlessness. There is some difference of opinion among scholars as to the nature of the original Vedic accent; some have suggested that it was based on pitch, others on stress; and one theory proposes that it referred to the relative height of the tongue.

In the most common style of Rigvedic and Yajurvedic chanting found today, that of the Tamil Aiyar Brahmins, it is clear that the accent is differentiated in terms of pitch. This chanting is based on three tones; the *udatta* and the nonaccented syllables (called *prachaya*) are recited

at a middle tone, the preceding *anudatta* syllable at a low tone, and the following *svarita* syllable either at the high tone (when the syllable is short) or as a combination of middle tone and high tone. The intonation of these tones is not precise, but the lower interval is very often about a whole tone, while the upper interval tends to be slightly smaller than a whole tone but slightly larger than a semitone. In this style of chanting the duration of the tones is also relative to the length of the syllables, the short syllables generally being half the duration of the long.

The more musical chanting of the Samaveda employs five, six, or seven tones and is said to be the source of the later secular and classical music. From some of the phonetic texts that follow the Vedic literature, it is apparent that certain elements of musical theory were known in Vedic circles, and there are references to three octave registers (*sthana*), each containing seven notes (*yama*). An auxiliary text of the Samaveda, the *Naradishiksha*, correlates the Vedic tones with the accents described above, suggesting that the Samavedic tones possibly derived from the accents. The Samavedic hymns as chanted by the Tamil Aiyar Brahmans are based on a mode similar to the D mode (D-d on the white notes of the piano; i.e., the ecclesiastical Dorian mode). But the hymns seem to use three different-sized intervals, in contrast to the two sizes found in the Western church modes. They are approximately a whole tone, a semitone, and an intermediate tone. Once again, the intervals are not consistent and vary both from one chanter to another and within the framework of a single chant. The chants are entirely unaccompanied by instruments, and this may account for some of the extreme variation of intonation.

The changes brought by the 20th century weakened the traditional prominent position of the Vedic chant. The Atharvaveda is seldom heard in India now. Samavedic chant, associated primarily with the large public sacrifices, also appears to be dying out. Even the Rigveda and Yajurveda are virtually extinct in some places, and South India is now the main stronghold of Vedic chant.

The classical period

The ritual of the Vedas involves only the three upper classes, or castes, of Aryan society: the Brahman, or priestly class; the Kshatriya, or prince-warriors; and the Vaishya, or merchants. The fourth caste, the Shudra, or labourers, were excluded from Vedic rites. The primary sources of religious education and inspiration for the Shudra were derived from what is sometimes called the fifth Veda: the epic poems *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*, as well as the collections of legends, called the Puranas, depicting the lives of the various incarnations of the Hindu deities. The *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* were originally secular in character, describing the heroic deeds of kings and noblemen, many of whom are not recorded in history. Subsequently, religious matter was added, including the very famous sermon *Bhagavadgita* ("Song of the Lord"), which has been referred to as the most important document of Hinduism; and many of the heroes of the epics were identified as incarnations of the Hindu deities. The legends were probably sung and recited by wandering minstrels

and bards even before the advent of the Christian Era, in much the same way as they still are. The stories were also enacted on the stage, particularly at the time of the religious festivals. The earliest extant account of drama is to be found in the *Natya-shastra* (“Treatise on the Dramatic Arts”), a text that has been dated variously from the 2nd century BCE to the 5th century CE and even later. It is virtually a handbook for the producer of stage plays and deals with all aspects of drama, including dance and music.

Theatrical music of the period apparently included songs sung on stage by the actors, as well as background music provided by an orchestra (which included singers) located offstage, in what was very like an orchestra pit. Melodies were composed on a system of modes, or *jatis*, each of which was thought to evoke one or more particular sentiments (*rasa*) by its emphasis on specific notes. The modes were derived in turn from the 14 *murchanas*—seven pairs of ascending seven-note series beginning on each of the notes of two closely related heptatonic (seven-note) parent scales, called *sadjagrama* and *madhyamagrama*. The *murchanas* were thus more or less analogous to the European modal scales that begin progressively on D, E, F, G, etc. A third parent scale, *gandharagrama*, was mentioned in several texts of the period and some even earlier but is not included in the system laid out in the *Natya-shastra*.

Qualities of the scales

The two parent scales differed in the positioning of just one note, which was microtonally flatter in one of the scales. The microtonal difference, referred to as *pramana* (“measuring”) *shruti*, presumably served as a standard of measurement. In terms of this standard, it was determined that the intervals of the *murchanas* were of three different sizes, consisting of two, three, or four *shrutis*, and that the octave comprised 22 *shrutis*. An interval of one *shruti* was not used. Several modern scholars have suggested that the *shrutis* were of unequal size; from the evidence in the *Natya-shastra*, it would appear, however, that they were thought to be equal. There has been no attempt to determine the exact size of the *shrutis* in any of the traditional Indian musical treatises until relatively modern times (18th century).

The term *shruti* was also used to define consonance and dissonance, as these terms were understood in the period. In this connection, four terms are mentioned: *vadi*, comparable to the Western term *sonant*, meaning “having sound”; *samvadi*, comparable to the Western *consonant* (concordant; reposeful); *vivadi*, comparable to *dissonant* (discordant; lacking repose); and *anuvadi*, comparable to *assonant* (neither consonant nor dissonant). As in the ancient Greek Pythagorean system, which influenced Western music, only fourths and fifths (intervals of four or five tones in a Western scale) were considered consonant. In the Indian system of measurement, tones separated by either nine or 13 *shrutis* correspond in size to Western fourths and fifths and are described as being consonant to each other. “Dissonant” in this system referred only to the minor second, an interval of two *shrutis*, and to its inversion (complementary interval), the major seventh (20 *shrutis*). All other tones, including the major third, were thought to be assonant.

The musical difference between the two parent scales is best seen not in terms of the microtonal deviation mentioned earlier but rather in terms of a musically influential consonance found in one but lacking in the other and vice versa. In each of the parent scales there are two nonconsonances, one of which is the tritone (interval of three Western whole tones, such as F-B) of 11 *shrutis* inevitable in all diatonic scales (seven-note scales of the major scale and *murchana* type) and which in medieval Europe was described as *diabolus in musica* (“the devil in music”).

The second is a microtonal nonconsonance unique to this ancient Indian system. It can be illustrated by referring in the subsequent explanation to [Click Here](#) to see full-size table

Table 1, in which the seven Indian notes *shadja*, *rishabha*, *gandhara*, *madhyama*, *panchama*, *dhaivata*, and *nishada* are given in their commonly abbreviated forms, *sa*, *ri*, *ga*, *ma*, *pa*, *dha*, and *ni*.

The nonconsonance arises from variances of one *shruti* from the fundamental consonances of the fourth and the fifth—a variance of about a quarter tone. In the *sadjagrama* scale the interval *ri-pa* (E⁻ to A) contains 10 *shrutis*; i.e., one more than the nine of the consonant fourth. Comparably, in the *madhyamagrama* scale the interval *sa-pa* (D to A⁻) contains 12 *shrutis*, or one fewer than the consonant fifth. These variances involve the consonant relationships of two melodically prominent notes, the first and the fifth. In the *madhyamagrama* the first note, *sa*, has no consonant fifth, and perhaps for this reason this scale is said to begin not on the *sa* (D) but on its fourth, the note *ma* (G); hence, it resembles the G mode—i.e., the ecclesiastical Mixolydian mode—whereas the *sadjagrama* resembles the D mode, the ecclesiastical Dorian.

There is a striking resemblance of the *sadjagrama* scale to the intervals used by the Tamil Aiyar Brahmans in their chanting of the Samaveda. Not only are their hymns set in a mode similar to the D mode, but they seem to use three different-sized intervals, the intermediate

one corresponding to the three-*shruti* interval. The *Natya-shastra* claims to have derived song (*gita*) from the chanting of the Samaveda, and the resemblances between the two may not be entirely fortuitous.

The two parent scales are complementary and between them supply all the consonances found in the ancient Greek Pythagorean scale. Thus, if in a mode the consonance *ri-pa* (E–A) were needed, one would tune to the *madhyamagrama* scale. But, if the consonance *sa-pa* (D–A) were important, it could be obtained with the *sadjagrama* tuning. There was a further development in this system caused by the introduction of two additional notes, called *antara ga* (F♯) and *kakali ni* (C♯), which could be substituted for the usual *ga* (F) and *ni* (C). The *antara ga* eliminates the 11-*shruti* tritone between *ga* and *dha* (F–B), but its use creates a further tritone between F♯ and C. The second additional note, *kakali ni* (C♯), eliminates this tritone but once again creates a new one, this time between C♯ and G. This process of adding notes, if carried further, would eventually lead to the circle, or, rather, the spiral, of fourths or fifths found in Western music (whereby a sequence of fifths, such as C–G, G–D, D–A, etc., leads eventually back to a microtonally out-of-tune C); there is no evidence that such a circle or spiral was known in ancient India.

Mode, or *jati*

From each of the two parent scales were derived seven modal sequences (the *murchanas* described above), based on each of the seven notes. The two *murchanas* of a corresponding pair differed from each other only in the tuning of the note *pa* (A), the crucial distinction in the tunings of the two parent scales. One of each pair was selected as the basis for a “pure” mode, or *shuddha-jati*; in the groups of seven pure modes, four used the tuning of the *sadjagrama* and three that of the *madhyamagrama*. In addition to these seven pure modes, a further 11 “mixed” modes, or *vikrita-jatis*, are also mentioned in the *Natya-shastra*. These were derived by a combination of two or more pure modes, but the text does not explain just in what way these derivations were accomplished.

The *jatis* were similar to the modern concept of raga in that they provided the melodic basis for composition and, presumably, improvisation. They were not merely scales, but were also assigned 10 melodic characteristics: *graha*, the initial note; *amsha*, the predominant note; *tara*, the note that forms the upper limit; *mandra*, the note that forms the lower limit; *nyasa*, the final note; *apanyasa*, the secondary final note; *alpatva*, the notes to be used infrequently; *bahutva*, the notes to be used frequently; *shadavita*, the note that must be omitted in order to create the hexatonic (six-note) version of the mode; and *audavita*, the two notes that must be omitted to create the pentatonic (five-note) version of the mode.

No written music survives from this early period. It is not clear from the description whether or not the music was like that of the present period. There is no mention of a drone, nor do the instruments of the orchestra—consisting of the *vipanchi* and *vina*, bamboo flute, a variety of drums, and singers—appear to include any specifically drone instrument, such as

the modern *tambura*. The evidence tends rather to suggest, from the emphasis on consonance and some of the playing techniques, that some form of organum (two or more parts paralleling the same melody at distinct pitch levels) and even some type of rudimentary harmony may have been characteristic.

Medieval period

Precursors of the medieval system

It is not clear just when the *jati* system fell into disuse, for later writers refer to *jatis* merely out of reverence for Bharata, the author of the *Natya-shastra*. Later developments are based on musical entities called *grama-ragas*, of which seven are mentioned in the 7th-century Kutimiyamalai rock inscription in Tamil Nadu state. Although the word *grama-raga* does not occur in the *Natya-shastra*, the names applied to the individual *grama-ragas* are all mentioned. Two of them, *sadjagrama-raga* and *madhyamagrama-raga*, are obviously related to the parent scales of the *jati* system. The other five seem to be variants of these two *grama-ragas* in which either or both the altered forms of the notes *ga* and *ni* (F# and C#) are used. In the *Natya-shastra* the reference to the various *grama-ragas* is far removed from the main section in which the *jati* system is discussed, and there is no obvious connection between the two. Each of the *grama-ragas* is said to be used in one of the seven formal stages of Sanskrit drama.

Further development of the *grama-ragas*

In the next significant text on Indian music, the *Brihaddeshi*, written by the theorist Matanga about the 10th century CE, the *grama-ragas* are said to derive from the *jatis*. In some respects at least, the *grama-ragas* resemble not the *jatis* but their parent scales. The author of the *Brihaddeshi* claims to be the first to discuss the term *raga* in any detail. It is clear that *raga* was only one of several kinds of musical entities in this period and is described as having “varied and graceful ornaments, with emphasis on clear, even, and deep tones and having a charming elegance.” The *ragas* of this period seem to have been named after the different peoples living in the various parts of the country, suggesting that their origin might lie in folk music. Matanga appears to contrast the two terms *marga* and *deshi*. The term *marga* (literally “the path”) apparently refers to the ancient traditional musical material, whereas *deshi* (literally “the vulgar dialect spoken in the provinces”) designates the musical practice that was evolving in the provinces, which may have had a more secular basis. Although the title *Brihaddeshi* (“The Great Deshi”) suggests that the latter music might have been the focus of the treatise and that the *grama-ragas* were possibly out of date by the time it was written, the surviving portion of the text does not support such a theory.

The mammoth 13th-century text *Sangitaratnakara* (“Ocean of Music and Dance”), composed by the theorist Sharngadeva, is often said to be one of the most important landmarks in Indian music history. It was composed in the Deccan (south-central India) shortly before the

conquest of this region by the Muslim invaders and thus gives an account of Indian music before the full impact of Muslim influence. A large part of this work is devoted to *marga*—that is, the ancient music that includes the system of *jatis* and *grama-ragas*—but Sharngadeva mentions a total of 264 ragas. Despite the use in both the *Brihaddeshi* and the *Sangitaratnakara* of a notation equivalent to the Western tonic sol-fa (i.e., with syllables, as do-re-mi...) to illustrate the ragas, modern scholars have not yet been able to reconstruct them with assurance.

The basic difficulty scholars face lies in determining the intervals used in each of the ragas. In the ancient system, the *jatis* were something like the ancient Greek and medieval church modes in that each was derived from a parent scale by altering the ground note and the tessitura (range). In modern Indian music, however, the ragas are all transposed to a common ground note. This change may well be connected with the introduction of the drone and the evolution of the long-necked-lute family on which the drone is usually played. In the old system, with the changing ground note, it would have been necessary to retune drone instruments from one raga to another, which would have been a cumbersome and impractical operation to carry out during a recital. It may have been this factor that provided the impetus for the change to the standard ground-note system. There is no conclusive evidence to show just when this change might have taken place, and it is not clear whether the *Brihaddeshi* and the *Sangitaratnakara* are using the old ground-note system or one similar to that used in modern times.

The Islamic period

Impact on musical genres and aesthetics

The Muslim conquest of India can be said to have begun in the 12th century, although Sindh (now in Pakistan) had been conquered by the Arabs as early as the 8th century. Muslim writers such as al-Jāhīẓ and al-Masʿūdī had already commented favourably on Indian music in the 9th and 10th centuries, and the Muslims in India seem to have been very much attracted by it.

In the beginning of the 14th century, the great poet Amīr Khosrow, who was considered to be extremely proficient in both Persian and Indian music, wrote that Indian music was superior to the music of any other country. Further, it is stated that, after the Muslim conquest of the Deccan under Malik Kāfūr (c. 1310), a large number of Hindu musicians were taken with the royal armies and settled in the north. Although orthodox Islam considered music illegal, the acceptance of the Sufi doctrines, in which music was an accepted means to the realization of God, enabled Muslim rulers and noblemen to extend their patronage to this art. At the courts of the Mughal emperors Akbar, Jahāngīr, and Shah Jahān, music flourished on a grand scale. Apart from Indian musicians, there were also musicians from Persia, Afghanistan, and Kashmir in the employ of these rulers; nevertheless, it appears that it was Indian music that was most favoured. Famous Indian

musicians, such as Svami Haridas and Tansen, are legendary performers and innovators of this period. After the example set by Amīr Khosrow, Muslim musicians took an active interest in the performance of Indian music and added to the repertoire by inventing new ragas, talas, and musical forms, as well as new instruments.

The Muslim patronage of music was largely effective in the north of India and has had a profound influence on North Indian music. Perhaps the main result of this influence was to de-emphasize the importance of the words of the songs, which were mostly based on Hindu devotional themes. In addition, the songs had been generally composed in Sanskrit, a language that had ceased to be a medium of communication except among scholars and priests. Sanskrit songs were gradually replaced by compositions in the various dialects of Hindi, Braj Bhasha, Bhojpuri, and Dakhani, as well as in Urdu and Persian. Nevertheless, the problems of communication, in terms of both language and subject matter, were not easily reconciled.

A new approach to religion was, in any case, sweeping through India at about this time. This emphasized devotion (*bhakti*) as a primary means to achieving union with God, bypassing the traditional Hindu beliefs of the transmigration of the soul from body to body in the lengthy process of purification before it could achieve the Godhead. The Islamic Sufi movement was based on an approach similar to that of the *bhakti* movements and also gained many converts in India. A manifestation of these devotional cults was the growth of a new form of mystic-devotional poetry composed by wandering mendicants who had dedicated their lives to the realization of God. Many of these mendicants have been sanctified and are referred to as poet-saints or singer-saints, since their poems were invariably set to music. A number of devotional sects sprang up all over the country—some Muslim, some Hindu, and others merging elements from both. These sects emphasized the individual's personal relationship with God. In their poetry, human love for God was often represented as a woman's love for a man and, specifically, the love of the milkmaid Radha for Krishna, a popular incarnation of the Hindu god Vishnu. In the environment of the royal courts, there was a less idealistic interpretation of the word "love," and much of the poetry, as well as the miniature painting, of the period depicts the states of experience of the lover and the beloved.

This attitude is also reflected in the musical literature of the period. From early times, both *jatis* and ragas in their connection with dramatic performance were described as evoking specific sentiments (*rasa*) and being suitable for accompanying particular dramatic events. It was this connotational aspect, rather than the technical one, that gained precedence in this period. The most popular method of classification was in terms of ragas (masculine) and their wives, called *raginis*, which was extended to include *putras*, their sons, and *bharyas*, the wives of the sons. The ragas were personified and associated with particular scenes, some of which were taken from Hindu mythology, while others represented aspects of the relationship between two lovers. The climax of this personification is found in the *ragamala*

paintings, usually in a series of 36, which depict the ragas and *raginis* in their emotive settings.

Theoretical developments

From the middle of the 16th century, a new method of describing ragas is found in musical literature. It was also at about this time that the distinction between North and South Indian music became clearly evident. In the literature, ragas are described in terms of scales having a common ground note. These scales were called *mela* in the South and *mela* or *thata* in the North.

It was in the South that a complete theoretical system of *melas* was introduced, in the *Chaturdandiprakashika* (“The Illuminator of the Four Pillars of Music”), a text written in the middle of the 17th century. This system was based on the permutations of the tones and semitones, which had by this time been reduced to a basic 12 in the octave. The octave was divided into two tetrachords, or four-note sequences, C–F and G–c, and six possible tetrachord species were arranged in an order showing their relationship with each other. It will be noted in the sequence of tetrachords shown below that each lower tetrachord has an analogous upper tetrachord and that the outer notes of each are constant, whereas the inner

1. C D♭ E♭ F	and	G A♭ B♭ c
2. C D♭ E♭ F		G A♭ B♭ c
3. C D♭ E F		G A♭ B c
4. C D E♭ F		G A B c
5. C D E F		G A B c
6. C D♯ E F		G A♯ B c

notes change their pitch.

The list could have extended further, except that apparently no pitch distinction was made between the enharmonic pairs D–E $\flat\flat$, D \sharp –E \flat , A–B $\flat\flat$, and A \sharp –B \flat . (Enharmonic notes have different pitch names but sound either the same pitch or, in some tuning systems, have very slight differences in pitch.)

By utilizing all possible combinations of a lower with an upper tetrachord, 36 *melas*, or raga scales, were derived; a further 36 were formed by using F \sharp in place of the F in the lower tetrachord. The *melas* were named in such a way that the first two syllables of the name, when applied in a code, gave the number of that *mela* in the sequence. The musician, given the number, could easily reconstruct the scale of the *mela*. The names of the *melas* were often derived from prominent ragas in those *melas*, with a two-syllable prefix that supplied the code numbers; for instance, the name of the *mela Dhira-shankarabharana* is derived from the raga *Shankarabharana*, the two syllables *dhira* giving the code number 29, which indicates a scale similar to the Western major scale, or C mode. The *Caturdandiprakashika* acknowledges the theoretical nature of its analytical system and mentions clearly that only 19 of the possible 72 *melas* were in use at the time that the text was written.

Although North Indian texts also describe ragas in terms of *melas* or *thatas*, there is no attempt to arrange them systematically. In the *Ragatarangini* (“The River of Raga”), probably

<i>bhairavi</i>	C	D	E♭	F	G	A	B♭	o
<i>tori</i>	C	D♭	E♭	F	G	A♭	B♭	o
<i>gauri</i>	C	D♭	E	F	G	A♭	B	o
<i>karnāta</i>	C	D	E	F	G	A	B♭	o
<i>kedāra</i>	C	D	E	F	G	A	B	o
<i>imana</i>	C	D	E	F♯	G	A	B	o
<i>sāraṅga</i>	C	D	E♯	F♯	G	A♯	B	o
<i>megha</i>	C	D	E	F	G	A♯	B	o
<i>dhanāśrī</i>	C	D♭	E	F♯	G	A♭	B	o
<i>pūravā</i>	C	D	E	F♯	G	A ⁺	B	o
<i>mukhārī</i>	C	D	E♭	F	G	A♭	B♭	o
<i>dīpaka</i>	no description							

of the 16th century, 12 *melas* are mentioned:

Although it appears from the description of *saranga* and *megha melas* that enharmonic intervals were used, there is good reason to believe that the E♯ and A♯ in the two *melas* really represent their chromatic counterparts, F and B♭, and that F and F♯ (and B and B♭) do not appear in sequence. The A⁺ in the *mela purava* is said to be raised by one *shruti*. The description of the ragas in these *melas* shows that the North Indian system was by this time also based on 12 semitones.

The modern period

With the collapse of the Mughal Empire in the 18th century and the emergence of the British as a dominant power in India, the subcontinent was divided into many princely states. Music continued to be patronized by the rulers, although the courts were never again to achieve their former opulence.

Musically, there has been a continuous evolution from the Islamic period to the present, and both North and South Indian classical music have continued to expand. South Indian music has clearly been influenced more by theory than has that of the North. The 72-*mela* system continues to be the basis of classifying the ragas in South India, but it has had more than a classificatory significance. Many new ragas have been composed in the past few centuries, some of them inspired by the theoretical scales of the *mela* system. As a result, there are now ragas in all of the 72 *melas*.

In North Indian music, theory has had little influence on performance practice. This can be ascribed to the language problem, an especially significant influence on the many Muslim musicians in North India, who were not able to cope with the Sanskrit musical literature. Thus, there had been no attempt to systematize the music, and there was a considerable gap between performance and theory until the present century. Vishnu Narayana Bhatkande, one of the leading Indian musicologists of this century, contributed a great deal toward diminishing the gap. Being both a scholar and a performer, he devoted much effort to collecting and notating representative versions of a number of ragas from musicians belonging to different family traditions, or *gharanas*. Based on this collection, he concluded that most of the ragas of North Indian music can be grouped into the following scales, called

thatas (compare the South Indian *melas* shown above in Theoretical developments):

<i>kalyāṇa</i>	C	D	E	F#	G	A	B	c
<i>bilāvala</i>	C	D	E	F	G	A	B	c
<i>khamājā</i>	C	D	E	F	G	A	Bb	c
<i>bhairava</i>	C	Db	E	F	G	Ab	B	c
<i>pūrvī</i>	C	Db	E	F#	G	Ab	B	c
<i>mārvā</i>	C	Db	E	F#	G	A	B	c
<i>kāfi</i>	C	D	Eb	F	G	A	Bb	c
<i>āsāvarī</i>	C	D	Eb	F	G	Ab	Bb	c
<i>bhairavī</i>	C	Db	Eb	F	G	Ab	Bb	c
<i>torī</i>	C	Db	Eb	F#	G	Ab	B	c

The *thatas* do not cover all the ragas used in North Indian music, but there is reason to believe that most of the ragas having scales other than the above are relatively modern innovations. New ragas are constantly being created, and some North Indian musicians are using the vast potential of the South Indian *mela* system as their source of inspiration.

Mela and *thata* are theoretical devices for the classification of ragas. Ragas have scalar elements, such as specified ascending and descending movements, that might or might not employ adjacent steps. They may also employ oblique or zigzag movements. Ragas can be heptatonic, hexatonic, or pentatonic and may also have accidentals (sharpened or flattened notes) that occur only in specific melodic contexts. A further distinction between scale and raga is found in the varying emphasis placed on different notes in a raga. Ragas, furthermore, also have melodic elements, such as certain recurrent nuclear motives (brief melodic fragments) that enable the raga to be identified more easily. One scale type can be the basis for perhaps 20 or 30 ragas, in which case it is the nonscalar elements that provide the distinguishing features of each raga in the group.

Rhythmic organization

South India

Just as the system of classifying raga is better organized in South Indian music, so too is the system of classifying tala, or time measure. The main group is composed of 35 talas, called the *suladi-talas*. Each tala is composed of one, two, or three different units: short, medium, and long. The medium unit is twice the duration of the short; the long unit is, however, a variable and may be three, four, five, seven, or nine times the duration of the short. There are seven basic tala patterns, and, because the long unit of these talas can be of five different durations, the total number of talas in this system is 35. The basic tala patterns are:

dhruva-tāla—long, medium, long, long
maṭhya-tāla—long, medium, long
rūpaka-tāla—medium, long
jhampā-tāla—long, short, medium
tripuṭa-tāla—long, medium, medium
āṭa-tāla—long, long, medium, medium
eka-tāla—only a single long.

The total duration of each pattern is controlled by the duration of the variable long; thus, if the long unit is five times the short, a tala pattern such as *dhruva-tala* will be 5 + 2 + 5 + 5, or

17 units. Several of these talas have the same total duration but are distinguished from each other by their internal subdivisions. In the course of a performance, the vocalist as well as the audience may mark the time by clapping, hand waving, and finger counting.

In addition to the *suladi-talas*, there are four *chapu-talas* that are used in South Indian classical music. Said to derive from folk music, they consist of two sections of unequal length, 1 + 2, 2 + 3, 3 + 4, and 4 + 5. Of these, the 3 + 4 combination is the most prominent. On rare occasions a performer may use one of the “classical” talas referred to in Sanskrit texts. These generally involve long time cycles composed of as many as 100 short units. The most frequently heard time measures, however, are *adi-tala*, a modified eight-beat version of *triputa-tala* (4 + 2 + 2); *mishra-chapu-tala* (3 + 4); and *rupaka-tala* (4 + 2). The difficult and long talas are used primarily as a tour de force. Each tala may be performed in either slow, medium, or quick tempo. There is no gradual acceleration as in North Indian music.

North India

In North Indian music the talas are fewer and not organized in any systematic manner. As in South Indian music, the two main factors are the duration of the time cycle and the subdivisions within the cycle. Each of these subdivisions is marked by a clap or a wave, with the greatest emphasis falling on beat 1 of the cycle, which is called *sam*. North Indian talas have a further feature, the *khali* (“empty”), a conscious negation of stress occurring at one or more points in each tala where one would expect a beat. It often falls at the halfway point in the time cycle and is marked by a wave of the hand. There is nothing comparable to the *khali* in the South Indian system. A further distinguishing feature found only in North Indian talas is the emphasis placed on the characteristic drum pattern of each tala, called *theke*. Two talas might have the same duration and subdivisions but might, nevertheless, be differentiated from each other by different characteristic drum patterns. In addition, the talas are also associated with different forms of song and even particular tempi. The usual North Indian talas range from six to 16 time units in duration. The most popular are *tin-tala* (4 + 4 + 4 + 4), *eka-tala* (2 + 2 + 2 + 2 + 2 + 2), *jhap-tala* (2 + 3 + 2 + 3), *kaharava* (4 + 4), *rupaka-tala* (3 + 2 + 2), and *dadra* (3 + 3). *Tin-tala* should not be confused with Western 4/4, or common time, for the time cycle repeats only after 16 units and is more like four bars of common time.

Musical forms and instruments

South India

Both raga and tala provide bases for composition and improvisation in Indian classical music. A performance usually begins with an improvised section, called *alapa*, played in free time without accompaniment of drums. It may have various sections and might on occasion last half an hour or longer. It is followed by a composed piece in the same raga, set in a particular tala. In South Indian music all composed pieces are primarily for the voice and

have lyrics. In North India, however, there are also some purely instrumental compositions, called *gat* and *dhun*. The emphasis on the composition varies in the different forms of song and, to some extent, in the interpretation of the performer. In South Indian music the composed piece is generally emphasized more than in the North. Much of the South Indian repertoire of compositions stems from three composers, Tyagaraja, Muthuswami Dikshitar, and Syama Sastri, contemporaries who lived in the second half of the 18th and the beginning of the 19th centuries. The devotional songs that they composed, called *kriti*, are a delicate blend of text, melody, and rhythm and are the most popular items of a South Indian concert. The composed elements in these songs sometimes include sections such as *niraval*, melodic variations with the same text, and *svara-kalpana*, passages using the Indian equivalent of the sol-fa syllables, which are otherwise improvised.

The longest item in the South Indian concert, called *ragam-tanam-pallavi*, is, on the other hand, mostly improvised. It begins with a long *alapa*, called *ragam* in this context, presumably because this elaborate, gradually developing *alapa* is intended to display the raga being performed in as complete a manner as possible, without the limitations imposed by a fixed time measure. This is followed by another improvised section, *tanam*, in which the singer uses meaningless words to produce more or less regular rhythms, but still without reference to time measure. This section, too, is without drum accompaniment. The final section, *pallavi*, is a composition of words and melody set in a particular tala, usually a long or complex one. The *pallavi* may have been composed by the performer himself and be unfamiliar to his accompanists, usually a violinist who echoes the singer's phrases and a drummer who plays the *mridangam* (see), a double-ended drum. The statement of the composition is followed by elaborate rhythmic and melodic variations that the accompanists are expected to follow. It is customary to have a drum solo at the end of the *pallavi*, and the performance concludes with a brief restatement of the *pallavi*.

Other forms used in South Indian classical music derive largely from the musical repertoire of *bharata natyam*, the classical South Indian dance. The *varnam*, a completely composed piece, serves mainly as a warming up and is performed at the beginning of a concert. *Pada* and *javali* are two kinds of love songs using the poetic imagery characteristic of the romantic-devotional movement mentioned earlier. *Tillana* has a text composed mostly of meaningless syllables, which may include the onomatopoeic syllables used to represent the different drum sounds. This is a very rhythmic piece and is usually sung in fast tempo.

The ensemble used in present-day South Indian classical music consists of a singer or a main melody instrument, a secondary melody instrument, one or more rhythmic percussion instruments, and one or more drone instruments. The most commonly heard main melody instruments are the *vina*, a long-necked, fretted, plucked lute with seven strings; the *venu*, a side-blown bamboo flute; the *nagaswaram*, a long, oboe-like, double-reed instrument with finger holes; the violin, imported from the West in the 18th century, played while seated on the floor with the scroll resting on the player's left foot; and the *gottuvadyam*, a long-necked lute without frets, played like the Hawaiian guitar, with a sliding stop in the left hand.



ghatam

The *ghatam*, an earthenware pot that is tapped with the fingers to provide rhythm in South Indian music.

The violin is by far the most common secondary melody instrument in South India. It plays in unison where the passage is composed but imitates the voice or main melody instrument in the improvised passages. Of the rhythm instruments, the *mridangam*, a double-conical, two-headed drum, is the most common. Others include the *kanjira*, a tambourine; the *ghatam*, an earthenware pot without skin covering; the *morsing*, a metallic jew's harp; and the *tavil*, a slightly barrel-shaped, double-ended drum, which accompanies the *nagaswaram*. The most prominent

drone instrument is the four-stringed *tambura*, a long-necked lute without frets. It accompanies the voice and all melody instruments, except the *nagaswaram*, which is usually accompanied by the *ottu*, a longer version of the *nagaswaram* but without finger holes. A hand-pumped harmonium drone, called *shruti* or *shruti* box, sometimes replaces the *ottu* or the *tambura*.

North India

The most common vocal form in North Indian classical music at the present time is the *khayal*, a Muslim word meaning "imagination." The *khayal* is contrasted to the *dhrupada* (now known as *dhrupad*), which means "fixed words." The two forms existed side by side in the Islamic period, and it is only since the 19th century that the *khayal* has been predominant. There are two types of *khayal*. The first is sung in extremely slow tempo, with each syllable of the text having extensive melisma (prolongation of a syllable over many notes), so that the words are virtually unrecognizable. It is not usually preceded by a lengthy *alapa*; instead, *alapa*-like phrases are generally sung against the very slow time measure to the accompaniment of the drums. Also characteristic of the *khayal* are the *sargam tanas*, passages using the Indian equivalent of the sol-fa syllables, and the *a-kar tanas*, which are rapid runs sung to the syllable *aah*. The second type of *khayal*, which may be as much as eight times faster than the slow and is generally set in a different *tala*, follows the slow. Its composed portion is usually quite short, and the main features of the improvisation are the *a-kar tanas*. Occasionally, a composition called *tarana*, made up of meaningless syllables, may replace the fast-tempo *khayal*.

The *thumri* is another North Indian vocal form and is based on the romantic-devotional literature inspired by the *bhakti* movement. The text is usually derived from the Radha-Krishna theme and is of primary importance. The words are strictly adhered to, and the singer attempts to interpret them with his melodic improvisations. It is quite usual for a singer to deviate momentarily from the *raga* in which the composition is set, by using accidentals and evoking other *ragas* that might be suggested by the words, but he always returns to the original *raga*.

Some of the North Indian musical forms are very like the South Indian. The vocal forms *dhrupad* and *dhamar* resemble the *ragam-tanam-pallavi*. They begin with an elaborate *alapa* followed by the more rhythmic but unmeasured *non-tom* using meaningless syllables such as *te*, *re*, *na*, *nom*, and *tom*. Then follow the four composed sections of the *dhrupad* or *dhamar*, the latter being named after *dhamar-tala* of 14 units (5 + 5 + 4) in which it is composed, the former name derived from *dhruvapada*. The song, usually in slow or medium tempo, is first sung as composed. Then the performer introduces variations, the words often being distorted and serving merely as a vehicle for the melodic and rhythmic improvisations.

Instrumental music has gained considerable prominence in North India in recent times. The most common instrumental form is the *gat*, which seems to have derived its elements from both *dhrupad* and *khayal*. It is usually preceded by *alapa* and *jor*, which resemble the *alapa* and *non-tom* sections of the *dhrupad*. On plucked stringed instruments these two movements are often followed by *jhala*, a fast section in which the rhythmic plucking of the drone strings is used to achieve a climax. The performer usually pauses before the composed *gat* is introduced. Like the *khayal*, the *gat* can be in slow or fast tempo. The composition is generally short, and the emphasis is on the improvisations of the melody instrumentalist and the drummer, who for the most part alternate in their extemporizing. The final climax may once again be achieved by a *jhala* section, in which the tempo is accelerated quite considerably. Other forms played on instruments are the *thumri*, basically an instrumental rendering of a vocal *thumri*, and *dhun*, which is derived from a folk tune and does not usually follow a conventional raga. One may also hear a piece called *raga-mala* (literally, “a garland of ragas”), in which the musician modulates from one raga to another, finally concluding with a return to the original raga.

The most prominent melody instruments used in North Indian classical music are the sitar, a long-necked fretted lute; the *surbahar*, a larger version of the sitar; the sarod, a plucked lute without frets and with a shorter neck than that of the sitar; the *sarangi*, a short-necked bowed lute; the *bansuri*, a side-blown bamboo flute with six or seven finger holes; the *shehnai*, a double-reed wind instrument similar to the oboe, but without keys; and the violin, played in the same manner as in South India. Secondary melody instruments are used only in vocal music, the two most common being the *sarangi* and the keyboard harmonium, an import from the West. The violin and the *surmandal*, a plucked board zither, are also used in this context. Since the mid-20th century, instrumental duets, in which the musicians improvise alternately, have grown in popularity. In these duets the musicians may imitate each other's phrases, temporarily creating something of the effect of a secondary melody instrument.

As with South Indian music, the drone is usually provided by a *tambura* (Bengali *tanpura*) or a hand-pumped reed drone similar to the harmonium but without a keyboard, called *surpeti* in North India. The *shehnai* is usually accompanied by one or more drone *shehnais*, called *sur*.

The rhythmic accompaniment is usually provided on the tabla, a pair of small drums played with the fingers. As accompaniment to the somewhat archaic *dhrupad*, however, the *pakhavaj*, a double-conical drum, similar to the South Indian *mridangam*, is generally used. The *shehnai* in classical music is usually accompanied by a small pair of kettledrums, called *dukar-tikar*.

Interaction with Western music

It is in the sphere of musical instruments that the influence of Western music is most obvious. In addition to the violin and the harmonium, many other Western instruments are used in Indian classical and popular music. Of the melodic instruments, these include, most notably, the clarinet, saxophone, trumpet, guitar, mandolin, and organ. Scholars have criticized the use of some of these instruments on the ground that their tuning, being based on the Western tempered scale (having 12 equal semitones), is not suitable for the performance of Indian music, and All-India Radio forbade the use of the harmonium in its programs for a number of years in the late 20th century. Most of the leading North Indian singers, however, have been using the harmonium as a secondary melody instrument for many years and have continued to do so in concerts and on recordings.

Apart from the area of musical instruments, Indian classical music appears to have absorbed very little of Western music. It is possible, however, that some developments in the tradition might have been inspired by Western music. These include the slightly increased use of chromaticism (using a succession of semitones) and some of the new drone tunings in which the major third is added (making for example, the drone on the first, third, and fifth notes of the scale, rather than on the first and fifth only). But the evidence is not conclusive, and it could equally be argued that these are natural developments within the system.

Advancements in technology have, of course, had a profound influence on Indian music. Sound-amplification devices have made concerts available to large audiences, and the intimate atmosphere in which the music was traditionally performed is now seldom encountered. The Indian musician has been obliged to adapt his music, once played before a select and musically educated group of listeners, to new circumstances involving a mass of people, many of whom are unfamiliar with the finer points of the music. The use of microphones during concerts has had a marked effect on voice production, and, since the voice no longer needs to project over distances, many singers now perform with a relaxed throat and produce a more mellow tone.

Since the mid-1950s, Indian classical music has been performed fairly regularly in the West. Initially, the audiences were composed mainly of South Asians, but now a large and increasing number of Westerners attend the concerts. Perhaps the music would not have reached beyond a very limited audience were it not for the interest shown by the American violinist Yehudi Menuhin, who sponsored a number of collaborative programs in the West in the 1960s, and the British popular-music group the Beatles, who pioneered the incorporation

of the sitar and other elements of Indian culture into the world of Western popular music. At the same time, several North Indian instrumentalists, such as Ravi Shankar, Ali Akbar Khan, Vilayat Khan, Imrat Khan, and Nikhil Banerjee, were received with overwhelming enthusiasm by Western audiences. By about 1970 the sitar and tabla were heard frequently in Western pop music, jazz, cinema, and television programs, as well as in radio and television advertisements.

Since the late 20th century the interaction between the musics of India, the West, and the world at large has become both more intense and more diverse. In the realm of popular music, jazz-rock (fusion) artists such as British guitarist John McLaughlin have gained international recognition with their energetic and eclectic assimilation of Indian music elements. Meanwhile, British-Indian world-music artist Sheila Chandra has blended the aesthetics of Western popular music with the ragas and drones of Indian music and the vocal techniques of Indian, Arab, Irish, and Scottish traditions to create a unique Asian fusion sound. Within the purview of classical music, Ravi Shankar composed and recorded a number of successful works for sitar and orchestra. Both he and his daughter, sitarist Anoushka Shankar, performed these compositions to wide international acclaim in the early 21st century. Anoushka, moreover, worked to strengthen the bridge between the classical and popular traditions of India and the West through touring and performing with such bands as the art rock group Jethro Tull.

Nazir Ali Jairazbhoy The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica

Dance and theatre

Theatre and dance in South Asia stem principally from Indian tradition. The principles of aesthetics and gesture language in the *Natya-shastra*, a 2,000-year-old Sanskrit treatise on dramaturgy, have been the mainstay of all the traditional dancers and actors in India. Even folk performers follow some of its conventions; e.g., the Kandyan dancers of Sri Lanka preserve some of the whirls and spins described in this ancient Indian text. Despite the influence of the different religious waves that swept the subcontinent through the centuries, the forms of South Asian dance and theatre were always able to preserve their ancient core.

Traditionally, dance and acting are inseparable. The classical South Asian dancer, equipped with a repertoire of gesture language, alternates between *nritta*, pure dance; *nritya*, interpretive dance; and *natya*, dance with a dramatic element. (The Sanskrit word *nata* means a dancer-actor.) Traditional theatre throughout both South and Southeast Asia is a combination of music, dance, mime, stylized speech, and spectacle. The classical and folk actor must be a dancer, a singer, and a mime in one.

Between the 2nd century BCE and the 8th century CE, South Indian kings sent overseas trade missions, priests, court dancers, and sometimes armies to Southeast Asia. During these years of cultural expansion, Indian dance forms, mythological lore, and the language of gesture flourished in Myanmar (Burma), Cambodia, Java, Sumatra, and Bali. Later, when India's

economic and political power shrank, its cultural empire remained intact. Even when these Southeast Asian countries embraced Buddhism or Islam, they continued performing dance dramas with Hindu gods and goddesses, adding to these their own local myths, costumes, and masks. The two Hindu epics, the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*, storehouses of dramatic personae of traditional dramas, have been absorbed by these countries as part of their own cultural heritage. Some dance forms and gesture vocabulary that died out in their land of birth have been preserved in Bali. For a discussion of the dance and theatre of Southeast Asia, see Southeast Asian arts: The performing arts.

The performing arts in India

The royal courts and temples of India traditionally have been the chief centres of the performing arts. In ancient times, Sanskrit dramas were staged at seasonal festivals or to celebrate special events. Some kings were themselves playwrights; the most notable of the playwright-kings was Shudraka, the supposed 4th-century author of *Mrichchakatika* ("The Little Clay Cart"). Other well-known royal dramatists include Harsha, who wrote *Ratnavali* in the 7th century; Mahendravikramavarman, author of the 7th-century play *Bhagavad-Ajjukya*; and Vishakhadatta, creator of the 9th-century drama *Mudrarakshasa*.

In the 4th century BCE, Kautilya, the chief minister of Emperor Chandragupta, referred in his book on the art of government, the *Artha-shastra*, to the low morals of players and advised the municipal authorities not to build houses in the midst of their villages for actors, acrobats, and mummers. But, in the glorious era of the Hindu kings during the first eight centuries CE, actors and dancers were given special places of distinction. This tradition continued in the princely courts of India even under British rule. *Kathakali* dance-drama, for instance, was created by the raja of Kottarakkara, ruler of one of the states of South India in the 17th century. The powerful *peshwas* (chief ministers) of the Maratha kingdom in the 18th century patronized the *tamasha* folk theatre. Nawab Wajid Ali Shah (flourished mid-19th century) was an expert *kathak* dancer and producer of Krishnalore plays in which his palace maids danced as the *gopis* (milkmaids who were devotees of Krishna). Maharajas of Travancore and Mysore competed with each other for the excellence of their dance troupes. In the 20th century the maharaja of Banaras (Varanasi) carried on this tradition by being patron and producer of the spectacular *ramlila*, a 31-day cycle play on Rama's life that he witnessed every night while sitting on his royal elephant. On special nights the spectators numbered more than 30,000.

Dance is a part of all Hindu rituals. Farmers dance for a plentiful harvest, hunters for a rich bag, fishermen for a good catch. Seasonal festivals, religious fairs, marriages, and births are celebrated by community dancing. A warrior dances before the image of his goddess and receives her blessings before he leaves for battle. A temple girl dances to please her god. The gods dance in joy, in anger, in triumph. The world itself was created by the Cosmic Dance of Lord Shiva, who is called Nataraja, the king of dancers, and worshipped by actors and dancers as their patron.

Religious festivals are still the most important occasions for dance and theatrical activity. The *ramlila krishnalala* and *raslila* in North India (Uttar Pradesh, Delhi, Rajasthan, Haryana, and Punjab), the *chhau* masked dance-drama in Saraikela region in Jharkhand, and the *bhagavatha mela* in Melatur village in Tamil Nadu are performed annually to celebrate the glory of their particular deities. During the Dashahara festival every village in North India enacts for a fortnight the story of Rama's life, with songs, dances and pageants. The *jatra* in West Bengal is a year-round dramatic activity, but the number of troupes swells to many thousands in Kolkata during the Puja festival. The hill and tribal people dance all night to celebrate their community festivals and weddings rich in masks, pageants, and carnivals. In more-remote areas of South Asia, people may not have seen a drama, but there will be hardly a person who has not witnessed or taken part in a community dance.

In folk theatre, traditional dance, classical music, and poetical symposia (especially the Urdu *mushā'irah*), performances are held in the open air or in a well-lit canopied courtyard so that the players can see the spectators and be motivated by their reactions.

For the usually all-night folk dramas, people come with their children, straw mats, and snacks, making themselves at home. At these performances there is a constant inflow and outflow of spectators. Some go to sleep, asking their neighbours to awaken them for favourite scenes. Stalls selling betel leaves, peanuts, and spicy fried things, adorned with flowers and incense and lighted by oil lamps, surround the open-air arena. The clown, an essential character in every folk play, comments on the audience and contemporary events. Zealous spectators offer donations and gifts in appreciation of their favourite actor or dancer, who receives them in the middle of the performance and thanks the donor by singing or dancing a particular piece of his choice. The audience thus constantly throws sparks to the performer, who throws them back. People laugh, weep, sigh, or suddenly fall silent during a moving scene.

In both folk and classical forms of drama, the performer may lengthen or shorten his piece according to audience response. During a *kathak* dance, the drummer, in order to test the perfection of the dancer, disguises the main beat of his drum by slurs and offbeats, a secret he shares with the audience and announces by a loud thump that is synchronized with the dancer's stamping of the foot. At this point in the dance, the spectators shout, swaying their heads in admiration. They show their approval and disapproval through delighted groans or sullen headshakes as the performance goes on. In the *raslila*, the audience joins in singing the refrain and marks the beat by hand clapping. At a climactic point the people rock and sway, rhythmically clapping and singing. These practices bind the performers, chanters, and spectators together in a sense of aesthetic pleasure.

Instrumental music and singing are integral parts of Indian dance and theatre. Musicians, chanters, and drummers sit on the stage in view, a tradition observed throughout almost all of Asia. They watch the dancer and play on their instruments following his movements, whereas in the West the movements of a ballerina are timed and controlled by the already

written music. An Indian dancer is constantly reacting to the accompanying musician, and vice versa. He may signal the chanters and drummers and even instruct them during the performance without spoiling its aesthetic effect.

In some classical dance forms, such as *kuchipudi*, the dancer sings in voiceless whispers as she dances. In *bharata natyam* the dance movements are like sculpted music in space, and the accompanying musician is invariably a dance guru (teacher). In *kathak* the rhythmic syllables beaten out by the dancer with her feet are vocalized by the singer and then chirped out by the drummer. No folk dancing is complete without the use of drum and vocal singing. Women's folk singing such as the *giddha* in the Punjab and the men's *kirtan* in West Bengal takes the form of dance when the rhythm becomes fast.

In folk theatre this relationship is even more apparent. *Raslila* dance sequences are interspersed with the singing as a decorative frill, to accentuate emotional appeal, or to mark the climax of a song. The *yakshagana* hero gives a brisk dance number to announce his entry. In many folk forms of opera (*bhavai*, *terukkuttu*, and *nautanki*), the characters sing and dance at the same time or alternate. Ballad singers from the states of Orissa and Andhra Pradesh dramatize their singing by strong facial gestures and rhythmic ankle bells and execute dance phrases between the narrative singing. On the other hand, no one can imagine a dancer who is not at the same time a musician. This double aesthetic discipline enriches both of these arts, and the Indian audience is conditioned to this tradition.

Indian dance

Dance in India can be organized into three categories: classical, folk, and modern. Classical dance forms are among the best-preserved and oldest practiced in the 21st century. The royal courts, the temples, and the guru to pupil teaching tradition have kept this art alive and stable. Folk dancing has remained in rural areas as an expression of the daily work and rituals of village communities. Modern Indian dance, a product of the 20th century, is a creative mixture of the first two forms, with freely improvised movements and rhythms to express the new themes and impulses of contemporary India.

The popularity of dance in contemporary India can be judged from the fact that there is hardly any Indian motion picture that does not have half a dozen dances in it. In the typical "boy meets girl" film the heroine dances everywhere and anywhere. A film company may not have a script writer (in some cases the financier writes the story himself), but it must have a dance director. To provide ample dance opportunities, motion pictures have been made on the lives of poets, courtesans, and temple dancers and on mythological themes. For these the services of expert dancers are sought.

In the 20th century, classical dance left the temples and royal courts and came to be presented regularly on the stage in large cities. Rich industrialists, international hotels, and the wealthy families of the upper class are the chief patrons. It is not uncommon to have a

classical dance recital by a major performer at a business dinner or for the annual function of a club. Some universities have dance as a regular subject in their curricula. Women learn it as a social grace, and young girls learn a few classical dances for greater eligibility in marriage. Folk dancing has also become more common as a contemporary cultural event in the cities. Most colleges have their folk-dance troupes, and even the police of the Punjab have their folk-dance groups to perform the *bhangra*.

Classical dance

The dance-drama

India has evolved through its classical and folk traditions a type of dance drama that is a form of total theatre. The actor dances out the story through a complex gesture language, a form that, in its universal appeal, cuts across the multilanguage barrier of the subcontinent. Some of the classical dance-drama forms (e.g., *kathakali*, *kuchipudi*, *bhagavatha mela*) enact well-known stories derived from Hindu mythology. In the 20th century, dancers Uday Shankar and Shanti Bardhan created ballets that were inspired by such traditional dance-dramas. Contemporary Indian directors and writers are re-examining traditional dance forms and are using these in their current works for greater psychological appeal and deeper artistic impact. Millions in villages are still entertained by dance-dramas. In spite of the popularity of straight prose plays in the cities, the appeal of dance-drama is unquestionably deeper and more satisfying to the rural Indian, whose aesthetics are still rooted in tradition.

The chief source of classical dance is Bharata Muni's *Natya-shastra* (1st century BCE to 3rd century CE), a comprehensive treatise on the origin and function of *natya* (dramatic art that is also dance), on types of plays, gesture language, acting, miming, theatre architecture, production, makeup, costumes, masks, and various *bhavas* ("emotions") and *rasas* ("sentiments"). No other book of ancient times contains such an exhaustive study of dramaturgy.

Techniques and types of classical dance

According to the *Natya-shastra*, the dancer-actor communicates the meaning of a play through four kinds of *abhinaya* (histrionic representations): *angika*, transmitting emotion through the stylized movements of parts of the body; *vachika*, speech, song, pitch of vowels, and intonation; *aharya*, costumes and makeup; and *sattvika*, the entire psychological resources of the dancer-actor.

The actor is equipped with a complicated repertoire of stylized gestures. Conventionalized movements are prescribed for every part of the body, the eyes and hands being the most important. There are 13 movements of the head, seven of the eyebrows, six for the nose, six for the cheek, seven for the chin, nine for the neck, five for the breasts, and 36 for the eyes.

There are 32 movements of feet, 16 on the ground and 16 in the air. Various positions of the feet (strutting, mincing, tromping, splaying, beating, etc.) are carefully worked out. There are 24 single-hand gestures (*asamyuta-hasta*) and 13 for combined hands (*samyuta-hasta*). One gesture (*hasta*) may mean more than 30 different things quite unrelated to each other. The *pataka* gesture of the hand, for example, in which all the fingers are extended and held close together with the thumb bent, can represent heat, rain, a crowd of men, the night, a forest, a horse, or a flight of birds. The *pataka* hand with the third finger bent (*tripataka*) can mean a crown, a tree, marriage, fire, a door, or a king. In *karkata* (“crab”), one of the combined hand gestures, the fingers of the hands are interlocked, and this may indicate a honeycomb, yawning after sleep, or a conch shell. Of course, for each of these different meanings, a *hasta* is given a different body posture or action.

The male or female classical dancer portraying a story in a solo performance simultaneously plays two or three principal characters by alternating facial expressions, gestures, and moods. Krishna, his jealous wife Satyabhama, and his gentle wife Rukmini, for example, may be played by one person.

The aesthetic pleasure of Hindu dance and theatre is determined by how successful the artist is in expressing a particular emotion (*bhava*) and evoking the *rasa*. Literally, *rasa* means “taste” or “flavour.” The *rasa* is that exalted sentiment or mood that the spectator experiences after witnessing a performance. The critics do not generally concern themselves so much about plot construction or technical perfection of a poem or play as about the *rasa* of a particular work. There are nine *rasas*: erotic, comic, pathetic, furious, heroic, terrible, odious, marvelous, and spiritually peaceful. There are nine corresponding *bhavas*: love, laughter, pathos, anger, energy, fear, disgust, wonder, and quietude.

Four distinct schools of classical Indian dance—*bharata natyam*, *kathakali*, *kathak*, and *manipuri*—exist in the 21st century, along with two types of temperament—*tandava*, representing the fearful male energy of Shiva, and *lasya*, representing the lyrical grace of Shiva’s wife Parvati. *Bharata natyam*, which takes its name from Bharata’s *Natya-shastra*, has the *lasya* character, and its home is Tamil Nadu, in South India. *Kathakali*, a pantomimic dance-drama in the *tandava* mood with towering headgear and elaborate facial makeup, originated in Kerala. *Kathak* is a mixture of *lasya* and *tandava* characterized by intricate footwork and mathematical precision of rhythmic patterns; it flourishes in the north. *Manipuri*, with its swaying and gliding movements, is *lasya*, and it has been preserved in Manipur state in the Assam Hills. In 1958 the Sangeet Natak Akademi (National Academy of Music, Dance and Drama) in New Delhi bestowed classical status on two other schools of dance—*kuchipudi*, from Andhra Pradesh, and *orissi*, from Orissa. These two styles overlap the *bharata natyam* school and therefore are not as distinctly different in temperament and style as other forms.

The *bharata natyam* school

Bharata natyam (also called *dasi attam*) has survived to the present through the *devadasis*, temple dancing girls who devoted their lives to their gods through this medium. Muslim invasions from the north destroyed the powerful Hindu kingdoms in the south but could not disrupt their arts, which took shelter in the temples. After the 16th century the Muslims overpowered the south completely until the British came, thus giving a setback to Hindu dance. Slowly the institution of *devadasi* fell into disrepute, and temple dancing girls became synonymous with prostitutes. In the latter half of the 19th century in Tanjore (Thanjavur), four talented dancers who were brothers—Chinniyah, Punniyah, Vadivelu, and Shivanandam—revived the original purity of *dasi attam* by studying and following the ancient texts and temple friezes, with missing links supplied by the socially spurned *devadasis*. Their popularized form of *dasi attam* was called *bharata natyam*.

A performance of *bharata natyam* lasts for about two hours and consists of six parts, beginning with *allarippu* (Telugu language, “to decorate with flowers”), a devotional prologue that shows off the elegance and grace of the dancer. The second part is *jatisvaram*, a brilliant blaze of *jatis* (“dance phrases”) with *svaras* (“musical sounds”). This is followed by *shabdham*, the singing words that prepare the dancer to interpret through *abhinaya* (gesture language) interspersed with pure dance. The fourth part is *varnam*, a combination of expressive and pure dance. Then follow the *padams*, songs in Telugu, Tamil, or Kannada that the dancer dramatizes by facial expressions and hand gestures. The accompanying singer chants the line again and again, and the dancer enacts the clashing and contrasting meanings. Her virtuosity consists of exhausting all possible shades of suggestion. The performance ends with *tillana*, a pure dance accompanied by meaningless musical syllables chanted to punctuate the rhythm. The dancer explodes into leaps and jumps forward and backward, from right and left, in a state of ecstasy. *Tillana* ends with three clangs of the cymbals while the dancer executes a triple blaze of *jatis*, thumping her feet with a jingling flourish of ankle bells.

Bharata natyam has attained world recognition as one of the most exquisite forms of classical dance. Its aspirants go to Tamil Nadu to learn from gurus who still live in villages. Because of its *lasya* character, performing artists have always been women. But their teachers have invariably been old men who chant the lines to tiny cymbals, controlling the complex rhythm without dancing themselves.

The major performers associated with the *bharata natyam* school of dance in the 20th century were T. Balasaraswathi, especially known for her *abhinaya* (expressive interpretation) of *padams*; Rukmini Devi, who popularized *bharata natyam* among the upper classes in the 1930s; Yamini Krishnamurthi; and Shanta Rao. Two of the most important gurus were Minakshisundaram Pillai, who injected vigour into *bharata natyam* by his choreography, and his son-in-law, Chokkalingam Pillai.

The *kathakali* school

Kathakali (*katha*, “story”; *kali*, “performance”) originated in the 17th century in Kerala, the lush tropical coastal strip of South India washed by the Arabian Sea. It was devised by the raja of Kottarakkara, who, angry over the refusal of a neighbouring prince to allow his dancers to perform a Sanskrit dance-drama in his court, decided to create his own dance troupe using Malayalam, the spoken language of the people. This school has its own *hastas*, based on a regional text influenced by the *Natya-shastra* and later treatises. It also has marked elements of energetic ritualistic dances. The makeup has its roots in the grotesque pre-Hindu Dravidian demon masks. Themes are taken mainly from the *Ramayana*, the *Shiva-purana*, the *Bhagavata-purana*, the *Mahabharata*, and other religious texts. The superhuman characters represent primal forces of good and evil at war. Because of its terrifying vigour, men play all the roles.

Most *kathakali* characters (except those of women, Brahmans, and sages) wear towering headgear and billowing skirts and have their fingers fitted with long silver nails to accentuate hand gestures. The principal characters are classified into seven types. (1) *Pachcha* (“green”) is the noble hero whose face is painted bright green and framed in a white bow-shaped sweep from ears to chin. Heroes such as Rama, Lakshmana, Krishna, Arjuna, and Yudhishtira fall into this category. (2) *Katti* (“knife”), haughty and arrogant but learned and of exalted character, has a fiery upcurled moustache with silver piping and a white mushroom knob at the tip of his nose. Two walrus tusks protrude from the corners of his mouth, his headgear is opulent, and his skirt is full. Duryodhana, Ravana, and Kichaka belong to this type. (3) *Chokannatadi* (“red beard”), power-drunk and vicious, is painted jet black from the nostrils upward. On both cheeks semicircular strips of white paper run from the upper lip to the eyes. He has black lips, white warts on nose and forehead, two long curved teeth, spiky silver claws, and a blood-red beard. (4) *Velupputadi* (“white beard”) represents Hanuman, son of the wind god. The upper half of his face is black and the lower red, marked by a tracery of curling white lines. The lips are black, the nose is green, black squares frame the eyes, and two red spots decorate the forehead. A feathery gray beard, a large furry coat, and bell-shaped headgear give the illusion of a monkey. (5) *Karupputadi* (“black beard”) is a hunter or forest dweller. His face is coal black with crisscross lines drawn around the eyes. A white flower sits on his nose, and peacock feathers closely woven into a cylinder rise above his head. He carries a bow, quiver, and sword. (6) *Kari* (“black”) is intended to be disgusting and gruesome. Witches and ogresses, who fall into this category, have black faces marked with queer patterns in white and huge, bulging breasts. (7) *Minnukku* (“softly shaded”) represents sages, Brahmans, and women. The men wear white or orange dhotis (loincloths). Women have their faces painted light yellow and sprinkled with mica, and their heads are covered by saris.

Under a flower-decked canopy on a square ground-level stage, a tall brass worship lamp brimming with coconut oil burns brightly. The musicians and dancers bow before it before they start performing. Drummers standing in one corner pound the *cenda*, a barrel-shaped drum with a piercing, clattering sound suited for battle scenes, and continue throughout the

performance, almost without respite. Two men hold a 12-by-6-foot (4-by-2-metre) embroidered hand curtain from behind which the principal characters make their entrances. They dance, grab the trembling curtain, and give vivid facial expressions with fearful glances and grunts. This “peering over the curtain,” called *tiranokku*, is a close-up that offers an actor full scope to display his art. At a climactic moment the curtain is whisked away, and the character enters in full splendour. The performance lasts all night, the singers singing the text that the dancers act out in an elaborate gesture language.

Well-known performers of *kathakali* include Guru Chandu Panikkar, Guru Kunju Kurup, Ramunni Nair, and Kalamandalam Krishna Nair. The dancers Guru Gopi Nath and Krishnan Kutty have both emphasized simplification of the use of towering headgear and thick-crusted, elaborate makeup, so that the art may be more commonly understood.

The *kathak* school

Kathak, born of the marriage of Hindu and Muslim cultures, flourished in North India under Mughal influence. *Kathak* dancers retain their 17th-century costumes but are steeped in Radha and Krishna love lore. Krishna, playing his flute in the Vrindavana woods on the bank of the Yamuna River, is surrounded by the *gopis* (“milkmaids”). Their play is the eternal game of the god and his devotees, the hide-and-seek of man and woman. This spiritual relationship is deeply passionate, with erotic love-play. Slowly the dance degenerated and found shelter in bawdy houses, where professional dancing girls practiced the art to make themselves more tantalizing. In the beginning of the 20th century it was reclaimed and revived, however, mainly through the efforts of Kalkaprasad Maharaj, whose three sons—Achchan, Lachchu, and Shambhu—perfected the art.

Because of its mixed *lasya* and *tandava* temperament, *kathak* is popular with both females and males. In *bharata natyam*, footwork is synchronized with hand gestures and eye movements, but *kathak* has no such rigid technique. It takes its movements from life, stylizes them, and adds complex rhythmic patterns. The mathematical precision in doubling and quadrupling the beat with quick transfers and shifts makes the onlookers dizzy.

A female *kathak* dancer generally wears a brocade blouse, a long, wide, shimmering silk skirt, a transparent tissue scarf of gold threads, and a heavy cluster of ankle bells. A musician, generally the guru, sits beside the drummer on the floor and vocalizes the complicated syllables of the drum that the dancer beats out with her feet. *Kathak*’s basic dance posture and some of the steps can be traced to the *rasilla* of Braj Bhoomi. The musical refrain, which is called *lehra*, provides the base on which the drummer and the dancer execute a rich tapestry of rhythmic patterns. Beats are called *matras* and the footwork *tatkar*. Important elements of the dance are *chakkars*, *torahs*, and *tihais*. *Chakkar* denotes whirling with great speed and stopping for a fraction of time after each whirl within the prescribed beat while at the same time maintaining the beauty of the form. *Torah* is a composition consisting of rhythmic syllables. *Tihai* is the repetition of a phrase of rhythmic

syllables used to adorn the concluding part of a *torah*. There are two styles of *kathak*: Jaipur *gharana* and Lucknow *gharana*. While the Lucknow *gharana* excels in *bhava*, the Jaipur *gharana* specializes in brilliance of footwork.

In the 20th century the major performers of *kathak* included Shambhu Maharaj, who specialized in *bhavapradarshan* (“display of emotion”), and Sunder Prasad, who concentrated on the *tala* and *layakari* aspects of the dance. Birju Maharaj, Gopi Krishan, Sitara Devi, and Damayanti Joshi all have important reputations in India as well as abroad.

The *manipuri* school

Manipuri has survived in the sheltered valley of Manipur in the Assam Hills. It remained aloof not only from foreign influences but also from the main Indian trends. Its isolation was broken only in the 1920s, when Rabindranath Tagore visited the valley and invited a leading guru of the area, Atomba Singh, to teach at his school in Santiniketan. The supple movements of *manipuri* dance were suitable for Tagore’s lyrical dramas, and he therefore employed them in his plays and introduced the dance as a part of the curriculum at his institution.

The *manipuri* dancer wears a large, stiff skirt that is glittering with round mirror pieces and a shimmering gauze veil. Her hair is done up in a high rolled crown that is adorned with chains of white blossoms, and her luminous cheeks and forehead are decorated with dots of sandalwood paste.

Known for its femininity, *manipuri* is marked by a slow, swooning rhythm. The dancer, with her hips thrust back and head tilted on one side, turns and sways and glides as if in a dream. The immobility of her face, like that of a mask, is in sharp contrast with the other three schools of dance, in which the face and eyes are a major source of expression.

The *manipuri* drummer, his bare torso in a white dhoti with a red border tucked up above his knees, dances while he plays on the drum. He slaps and thumps; the drum rumbles and howls and chuckles. Drunk with its rhythm, the drummer dances in wild, frenzied leaps. His energetic and electric movements are a masculine counterpart to the slow, undulating patterns woven by the female dancer.

Chief 20th-century exponents of *manipuri* included Atomba Singh, who preserved the tradition of *ras* dancing, and Amubi Singh.

The *kuchipudi* school

Kuchipudi dance-dramas owe their origin to the small village of Kuchipudi (Kuchelapuram) in Andhra Pradesh. Their form was originated in the 17th century by Sidhyendra Yogi, creator of the superb dance-drama *Bhama Kalapam*, which is the story of charming Satyabhama, jealous wife of Lord Krishna. Sidhyendra Yogi taught the art to Brahman boys

of Kuchipudi and gave a performance with them in 1675 for the nawab of Golconda, who was so pleased that he granted Kuchipudi to the Brahman Bhavathas for the preservation of this art. Even into the 20th century, every Brahman of Kuchipudi was expected to perform at least once in his life the role of Satyabhama as an offering to Lord Krishna.

The *kuchipudi* dance begins with worship rituals. A male dancer moves about sprinkling holy water, and then incense is burned. *Indra-dhvaja* (the flagstaff of the god Indra) is planted on the stage to guard the performance against outside interference. Women sing and dance with worship lamps, followed by the worship of Ganesha, the elephant god, who is traditionally petitioned for success before all enterprises. The *bhagavatha* (stage manager-singer) sings invocations to the goddesses Sarasvati (Learning), Lakshmi (Wealth), and Parashakti (Parent Energy), in between chanting drum syllables.

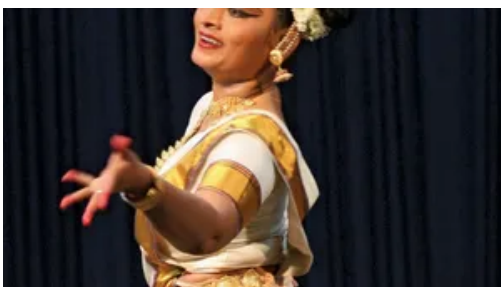
Two men hold up the traditional coloured curtain. A long gold-embroidered braid is hung on the curtain as a challenge to anyone among the spectators who dares to act and dance. If anyone should take up this braid, the hero playing the female character Satyabhama will cut off “her” hair. The principal characters are introduced from behind the curtain after each one has done a brisk dance, and at that time the *bhagavatha* sings out the background and function of each. All roles are traditionally played by men (but since the mid-20th century by women also), and all the four elements of *abhinaya* are used—dance, song, costume, and psychological resources. Thus, *kuchipudi* differs from other classical dances in which the performers do not sing.

Among the major *kuchipudi* dancers of the 20th century were Guru Chinta Krishnamurthi, Vedantam Satyanarayana, and Yamini Krishnamurthi.

The *odissi* tradition

Odissi, practiced in Orissa, claims to be over 2,000 years old and the true inheritor of the *Natya-shastra* tradition. It originated and was initially developed in the temples and later flourished in the courts as well. Many of the 108 basic dance units (*karanas*) mentioned in the *Natya-shastra* can be found only in *odissi*, and many of its dance poses are sculpted on the exterior of the temples of Bhubaneswar, Konarak, and Puri. Kelu Charan Mahapatra and Indrani Rehman were the principal 20th-century figures associated with *odissi*.

Other classical dance forms



Pallavi Krishnan

Among other classical or semiclassical dance forms are *bhagavatha mela*, *mohini attam*, and *kuravanchi*. Performed at the annual Narasimha Jayanti festival in Melatur village in Tamil Nadu, the *bhagavatha mela* uses classical gesture language with densely textured Karnatak (South Indian classical) music. Its repertoire was enriched by the musician-poet Venkatarama

Pallavi Krishnan performing “mohini attam”.

Sastri (1759–1847), who composed important dance-dramas in the Telugu language. *Mohini attam* is based

on the legend of the Hindu mythological seductress Mohini, who tempted Shiva. It is patterned on *bharata natyam* with elements of *kathakali*. It uses Malayalam songs with Karnatak music. *Kuravanchi* is a dance-drama of lyrical beauty prevalent in Tamil Nadu. It is performed by four to eight women, with a gypsy fortune-teller as initiator of the story of a lady pining for her lover. Formally, it is a mixture of the folk and classical types of Indian dance.

Folk dance

Indian folk dances have an inexhaustible variety of forms and rhythms. They differ according to region, occupation, and caste. The Adivasis (aboriginal tribes) of central and eastern India (Murias, Bhils, Gonds, Juangs, and Santals) are the most uninhibited in their dancing. There is hardly a national fair or festival where these dances are not performed. The most impressive occasion occurs every January 26 on Republic Day, when dancers from all parts of India come to New Delhi to dance in the vast arena of the National Stadium and along a five-mile parade route.

It is difficult to categorize Indian folk dances, but generally they fall into four groups: social (concerned with such labours as tilling, sowing, fishing, and hunting); religious (in praise of deities or in celebration of spiritual fulfillment); ritualistic (to propitiate a deity with magical rites); and masked (a type that appears in all the above categories).

The *kolyacha* is among the better-known examples of social folk dance. A fisherman's dance indigenous to the Konkan coast of west-central India, the *kolyacha* is an enactment of the rowing of a boat. Women wave handkerchiefs to their male partners, who move with sliding steps. For wedding parties, young Kolis dance in the streets carrying household utensils for the newlywed couple, who join the dance at its climax.

The national social folk dance of Rajasthan is the *ghoomar*, danced by women in long full skirts and colourful *chuneris* (squares of cloth draping head and shoulders and tucked in front at the waist). Especially spectacular are the *kachchi ghoris* dancers of this region. Equipped with shields and long swords, the upper part of their bodies each arrayed in the traditional attire of a bridegroom and the lower part concealed by a brilliant-coloured papier-mâché horse built up on a bamboo frame, they enact jousting contests at marriages and festivals. Bawaris generally are expert in this form of folk dance.

In the Punjab region, which spans parts of India and Pakistan, the most dynamic social folk dance is the male harvest dance, *bhangra*. This dance is always punctuated by a song. At the end of every line the drum thunders. The last line is taken up by all the dancers in a chorus. In ecstasy they spring, bellow, shout, and gallop in a circle, madly wiggling their shoulders and hips. Any man of any age can join.

The Lambadi women of Andhra Pradesh wear mirror-speckled headdresses and skirts and cover their arms with broad, white bone bracelets. They dance in slow, swaying movements, with men acting as singers and drummers. Their social dance is imbued with impassioned grace and lyricism.

The bison-horn dance of the Muria tribe in Madhya Pradesh is performed by both men and women, who traditionally have lived on equal terms. The men wear a horned headdress with a tall tuft of feathers and a fringe of cowry shells dangling over their faces. A drum shaped like a log is slung around their necks. The women, their heads surmounted by broad, solid-brass chaplets and their breasts covered with heavy metal necklaces, carry sticks in their right hands like drum majorettes. Fifty to 100 men and women dance at a time. The male “bison” attack and fight each other, spearing up leaves with their horns and chasing the female dancers, while imitating various movements of a bison.

The Juang tribe in Orissa performs bird and animal dances with vivid miming and powerful muscular agility.

Some major examples of religious folk dances are the *dindi* and *kala* dances of Maharashtra, which are expressions of religious ecstasy. The dancers revolve in a circle, beating short sticks (*dindis*) to keep time with the chorus leader and a drummer in the middle. As the rhythm accelerates, the dancers form into two rows, stamp their right feet, bow, and advance with their left feet, making geometric formations. The *kala* dance features a pot symbolizing fecundity. A group of dancers forms a double-tiered circle with other dancers on their shoulders. On top of this tier a man breaks the pot and splashes curds over the torsos of the dancers. After this ceremonial opening, the dancers twirl sticks and swords in a feverish battle dance.

Garba is perhaps the best-known religious dance of Gujarat. It is typically danced by a group of women (although men may also be included) during the yearly nine-night Navratri festival in honour of the divine feminine. The dancers usually move in a circle, bending, turning, clapping their hands, and sometimes snapping their fingers. Songs in praise of the goddess often accompany this dance.

Of the endless variety of ritualistic folk dances, many have magical significance and are connected with ancient cults. The *karakam* dance of Tamil Nadu state, mainly performed on the annual festival in front of the image of Mariyammai (goddess of pestilence), is to deter her from unleashing an epidemic. Tumbling and leaping, the dancer retains on his head without touching it a pot of uncooked rice surmounted by a tall bamboo frame. People ascribe this feat to the spirit of the deity, which, it is believed, enters his body. The Therayattam festival in Kerala is held to propitiate the gods and demons recognized by the pantheon of the Malayalis. The dancers, arrayed in awe-inspiring costumes and frightening masks, enact colourful rituals before the village shrine. A devotee makes an offering of a

cock. The dancer grabs it, chops off its head in one stroke, gives a blessing, and hands it back to the devotee. This ceremony is punctuated by a prolonged and ponderous dance.

The greatest number of masked folk dances are found in Arunachal Pradesh, where the influence of Tibetan dance may be seen. The yak dance is performed in the Ladakh section of Kashmir and in the southern fringes of the Himalayas near Assam. The dancer impersonating a yak dances with a man mounted on his back. In *sada topo tsen* men wear gorgeous silks, brocades, and long tunics with wide flapping sleeves. Skulls arranged as a diadem are a prominent feature of their grotesquely grinning wooden masks representing spirits of the other world. The dancers rely on powerful, rather slow, twirling movements with hops.

The *chhau*, a unique form of masked dance, is preserved by the royal family of the former state of Saraikela in Jharkhand. The dancer impersonates a god, animal, bird, hunter, rainbow, night, or flower. He acts out a short theme and performs a series of vignettes at the annual Chaitra Parva festival in April. *Chhau* masks have predominantly human features slightly modified to suggest what they are portraying. With serene expressions painted in simple, flat colours, they differ radically from the elaborate facial makeup of *kathakali* or the exaggerated ghoulishness of the Kandyan masks. His face being expressionless, the *chhau* dancer's body communicates the total emotional and psychological tensions of a character. His feet have a gesture language; his toes are agile, functional, and expressive. The dancer is mute; no song is sung. Only instrumental music accompanies him. In another form of *chhau*, practiced in the Mayurbhanj district of Orissa, the actors do not wear masks, but through deliberately stiff and immobile faces they give the illusion of a mask. The style of their dance is vigorous and acrobatic.

Modern Indian dance

While in the West the theatrical elements of spoken words, music, and dance developed independently and evolved in the forms of drama, opera, and ballet, Indian theatrical tradition continued to combine the three in its dramas. Indian films still follow this rule (the heroine suddenly bursts into a song or dances for the hero). Since the mid-20th century, dance in the form of ballet with choreography in the Western sense has emerged as a distinct form.

Modern Indian ballet started with Uday Shankar, who went to England to study the plastic arts and was chosen by the Russian ballerina Anna Pavlova to be her partner in the ballet *Radha and Krishna*. Young Shankar returned to India fired with enthusiasm. After studying the essentials of the four major styles of classical dance, he created new ballets with complex choreography and music, mixing the sounds from wooden clappers and metal cymbals with those of traditional instruments. He used classical and folk rhythms. Employing Western stage techniques, he presented his ballets with a skill and style previously unknown to Indian audiences. These ballets included *Shiva-Parvati* and *Lanka Dahan* ("The Burning of

Lanka”), in which he used wooden masks from Ceylon (Sri Lanka). In *Rhythm of Life* (1938) and in *Labour and Machinery* (1939), he employed contemporary political and social themes. He established a culture centre at Almora in 1939 and during its four years’ existence created a whole generation of modern dancers.

Shanti Bardhan, a junior colleague of Uday Shankar, produced some of the most imaginative dance-dramas of the 20th century. After founding the Little Ballet Troupe in Andheri, Bombay (Mumbai), in 1952 he produced *Ramayana*, in which the actors moved and danced like puppets. His posthumous production *Panchatantra (The Winning of Friends)* is based on an ancient fable of four friends (Mouse, Turtle, Deer, and Crow), in which he used masks and the mimed movements of animals and birds.

Narendra Sharma and Sachin Shankar, both pupils of Uday Shankar, continued his tradition. Other important figures who have shaped modern Indian dance include Menaka, Ram Gopal, and Mrinalini Sarabhai, who has experimented with conveying modern themes through the *bharata natyam* and *kathakali* styles.

Dance-training centres

Dance training in small academies and local *kala kendras* (“art centres”) is available all over contemporary India. Most universities have introduced dance as a subject in their curricula. The gurus still impart specialized training to pupils who go to live with them in villages and learn the art over a number of years. But there are many state-run or public-financed training centres, most organized in the 20th century, that attract students from all over the world. Among the most important of these are Kerala Kalamandalam (Kerala Institute of Arts), near Shoranur; Kalakshetra at Adyar, Tamil Nadu; Kathak Kendra, a dance branch of the Shriram Bharatiya Kala Kendra in New Delhi; Triveni Kala Sangam (Centre of Music, Dance, and Painting), at New Delhi; Darpana Academy in Ahmadabad, Gujarat; Visva-Bharati (founded by Rabindranath Tagore), at Santiniketan, West Bengal; and the Jawaharlal Nehru Manipuri Dance Academy, at Imphal.

Indian theatre

Classical theatre

Classical Sanskrit theatre flourished during the first nine centuries CE. Aphorisms on acting appear in the writings of Panini, the Sanskrit grammarian of the 5th century BCE, and references to actors, dancers, mummers, theatrical companies, and academies are found in Kautilya’s book on statesmanship, the *Artha-shastra* (4th century BCE). But classical structure, form, and style of acting and production with aesthetic rules were consolidated in Bharata Muni’s treatise on dramaturgy, *Natya-shastra*. Bharata defines drama as a

mimicry of the actions and conduct of people, rich in various

emotions, depicting different situations. This relates to actions of men good, bad and indifferent and gives courage, amusement, happiness, and advice to all of them.

Bharata classified drama into 10 types. The two most important are *nataka* (“heroic”), which deals with the exalted themes of gods and kings and draws from history or mythology (Kalidasa’s *Shakuntala* and Bhavabhuti’s *Uttararamacharita* fall into this category), and *prakarana* (“social”), in which the dramatist invents a plot dealing with ordinary human beings, such as a courtesan or a woman of low morals (Shudraka’s *Mrichchakatika*, “The Little Clay Cart,” belongs to this type). Plays range from 1 to 10 acts. There are many types of one-act plays, including *bhana* (“monologue”), in which a single character carries on a dialogue with an invisible one, and *prahasana* (“farce”), which is classified into two categories—superior and inferior, both dealing with courtesans and crooks. King Mahendravarman’s 7th-century-CE *Bhagavad-Ajjukya* (“The Harlot and the Monk”) and *Mattavilasa* (“Drunken Revelry”) are examples of *prahasana*.

There are three structural types of classical theatre: oblong, square, and triangular, each further divided into large, medium, and small sizes. According to the *Natya-shastra*, the playhouse was “like a mountain cave” with two floors at different levels, small windows so that outside noise and wind would not interfere with the acoustics, and a backstage for actors to do makeup, costumes, and offstage noise effects. Bharata disapproved of a large playhouse and recommended the medium-size structure meant for court productions.

The ancient Hindus insisted on a small playhouse, because dramas were acted in a highly stylized gesture language with subtle movements of eyes and hands. Hindu theatre differed from its Greek counterpart in temperament and method of production. The three unities rigidly followed by the Greeks were totally unknown to Sanskrit dramatists. Less time was consumed by a Greek program of three tragedies and a farce than by a single Sanskrit drama, with its subsidiary plots and wide variety of characters and moods. The Greeks laid emphasis on plot and speech, the Hindus on the four types of acting and visual demonstration. People were audiences to the Greeks and spectators to the Hindus. The aesthetic rules also differed. Aristotle’s theory of catharsis bears no resemblance to Bharata’s theory of *rasa*. The Greek conception of tragedy is totally absent in Sanskrit dramas, as is the aesthetic principle that prohibits any death or defeat of the hero on stage.

There were two types of Hindu productions: the *lokadharmi*, or realistic theatre, with natural presentation of human behaviour and properties catering to the popular taste, and the *natyadharmi*, or stylized drama, which, using gesture language and symbols, was considered more artistic. In *Shakuntala* the king enters riding an imaginary chariot, and Shakuntala plucks flowers that are not there; in “The Little Clay Cart” the thief breaks through a nonexistent wall, and Maitreya passes through Vasantasena’s seven courtyards by miming.

A classical play traditionally opened with the *nandi*, a benediction of eight to 12 lines of verse in praise of the gods, after which the *sutra-dhara* (stage manager) entered with his wife and described the place and occasion of the action. The last sentence of his prologue served as a bridge leading to the action of the play. In *Shakuntala* he refers to the bewitching song of his wife, which has made him forget his surroundings as the pursuit of a deer has made the king forget his state affairs. At this point the king enters, riding his hunting chariot, and the spectators are plunged into action of the play.

The *vidushaka* (clown) is a noble, good-hearted, blundering fool, the trusted friend of the hero. A bald-headed glutton, comic in speech and manners, he is the darling of the spectators. With the decline of Sanskrit drama the folk theatre in various regional languages inherited the conventions of the opening prayer song, the *sutra-dhara*, and the *vidushaka*.

The only surviving Sanskrit drama is *kudiyattam*, still performed by the Chakkayars of Kerala. Some principles of the *Natya-shastra* are evident in their presentations.

The earliest available classical dramas are 13 plays edited in 1912 by Pandit Ganapati Sastri, who dug out their manuscripts in Trivandrum, the capital of Kerala state. These, ascribed to Bhasa (1st century BCE–1st century CE), include the one-act *Urubhanga* (“The Broken Thigh”), a tragedy that is a departure from Sanskrit convention, and the six-act *Svapnavasavadatta* (“The Dream of Vasavadatta”).

The most acclaimed dramatist is Kalidasa. Other important playwrights succeeding him include Harsha, Mahendravikramavarman, Bhavabhuti, and Vishakhadatta. An exception is King Shudraka, whose work is perhaps the most theatrical in the entire Sanskrit range.

The title of “The Little Clay Cart” represents a departure from Sanskrit tradition, in which a *prakarana* was generally named after its hero and heroine. *Malavikagnimitra*, for example, is the love story of Princess Malavika and King Agnimitra, *Vikramorvashi* is the tale of King Pururavas and the heavenly nymph Urvashi, and *Malati-Madhava* is the love drama of Malati and Madhava. Shudraka, as if to mock tradition, chose an insignificant homely incident—the hero’s son playing with a toy cart—and elevated this to the title.

“The Little Clay Cart” has a wide range of characters. The plot does not progress in a straight line but zigzags along a winding path. During its 10 acts the hero does not appear in four of them, the heroine is absent from three, and the lustful villain disappears after the first act until the eighth. Each act is an almost independent play. The device used to link the acts is that of ending them with subtitles that sum up their particular themes or plots.

“The Little Clay Cart” has been successful in the West, whereas Indian audiences, still fed on poetic-flavoured characters and romances of an ethereal type, have favoured *Shakuntala*. Western audiences find “The Little Clay Cart” more in their own tradition of realism and individualized characterization. Its “lispng villain,” gamblers, and rogues have something in

common with Shakespeare's comic characters and Molière's crooks. "The Little Clay Cart" is better theatre, whereas *Shakuntala* is better poetry.

Folk theatre

After the decline of Sanskrit drama, folk theatre developed in various regional languages from the 14th through the 19th century. Some conventions and stock characters of classical drama (stage preliminaries, the opening prayer song, the *sutra-dhara*, and the *vidushaka*) were adopted into folk theatre, which lavishly employs music, dance, drumming, exaggerated makeup, masks, and a singing chorus. Thematically, it deals with mythological heroes, medieval romances, and social and political events, and it is a rich store of customs, beliefs, legends, and rituals. It is a "total theatre," invading all the senses of the spectators.

The most crystalized forms are the *jatra* of Bengal, the *nautanki*, *ramlila*, and *raslila* of North India, the *bhavai* of Gujarat, the *tamasha* of Maharashtra, the *terukkuttu* of Tamil Nadu, and the *yakshagana* of Karnataka.

Folk theatre is performed in the open on a variety of arena stages; round, square, rectangular, multiple-set. The *bhavai*, enacted on a ground-level circle, and the *jatra*, on a 16-foot (5-metre) square platform, have gangways that run through the surrounding audience and connect the stage to the dressing room. Actors enter and exit through these gangways, which serve a function similar to the *hanamichi* of the Japanese Kabuki theatre. In the *ramlila* the action sometimes occurs simultaneously at various levels on a multiple set. Actors in *nautanki* and *bhavai* sit on the stage in full view instead of exiting and sing or play an instrument as a part of the chorus. In the *ramlila* the actor playing Ravana removes his 10-headed mask when he is not acting and continues sitting on his throne, but for the spectators he is theatrically absent. Asides, soliloquies, and monologues abound. Scenes melt into one another, and the action continues in spite of change of locale.

In most folk forms the art of the actor is hereditary. He learns by watching his elders throughout childhood. He starts with drumming, then dancing, plays female roles, and then major roles.

All roles are played by men except that of the *tamasha* woman, who is always a dancer-singer-actress. Since the mid-20th century, women have increasingly played female roles in the *jatra*, but they have yet to achieve the artistic stature of their professional male counterparts.

In the *ramlila* and *raslila* the principal characters—Rama and Krishna—are always played by boys under age 14, because tradition decreed they must be pure and innocent. They are considered representatives of the gods and are worshipped on these occasions. In the *ramlila* the *vyas* ("director"), present on the stage throughout the performance, prompts and directs the characters loudly enough for the audience to hear. This is not regarded as

disturbing, because it is an accepted part of the tradition. Adult roles such as Ravana and Hanuman are sometimes played by the same individual throughout his life.

Of the nonreligious forms, the *jatra* and the *tamasha* are most important. The *jatra*, also popular in Orissa and eastern Bihar, originated in Bengal in the 15th century as a result of the *bhakti* movement, in which devotees of Krishna went singing and dancing in processions and in their frenzied singing sometimes went into acting trances. This singing with dramatic elements gradually came to be known as *jatra*, which means “to go in a procession.” In the 19th century the *jatra* became secularized when the repertoire swelled with love stories and social and political themes. Until the beginning of the 20th century, the dialogue was primarily sung. The length has been cut from all night to four hours. The *jatra* performance consists of action-packed dialogue with only about six songs. The singing chorus is represented by a single character, the *vivek* (“conscience”), who can appear at any moment in the play. He comments on the action, philosophizes, warns of impending dangers, and plays the double of everybody. Through his songs he externalizes the inner feelings of the characters and reveals the inner meaning of their outer actions.

The *tamasha* (a Persian word meaning “fun,” “play,” or “spectacle”) originated at the beginning of the 18th century in Maharashtra as an entertainment for the camping Mughal armies. This theatrical form was created by singing girls and dancers imported from North India and the local acrobats and tumblers of the lower-caste Dombari and Kolhati communities with their traditional manner of singing. It flourished in the courts of Maratha rulers of the 18th and 19th centuries and attained its artistic apogee during the reign of Baji Rao II (1796–1818). Its uninhibited *lavani*-style singing and powerful drumming and dancing give it an erotic flavor. The most famous *tamasha* poet and performer was Ram Joshi (1762–1812) of Sholapur, an upper-class Brahman who married the courtesan Bayabai. Another famous singer-poet was Patthe Bapu Rao (1868–1941), a Brahman who married a beautiful low-caste dancer, Pawala. They were the biggest *tamasha* stars during the first quarter of the 20th century. The *tamasha* actress, commonly called the *nautchi* (meaning “nautch girl,” or “prostitute”) is the life and soul of the performance. Because of their bawdy elements, women never see *tamasha* plays, nor do respectable men.

In the 20th century, *jatra* and *tamasha* both became highly organized and commercially run. Troupes are now in heavy demand and work for nine months. Hundreds of *tamasha* troupes with many dancer-actresses tour the rural areas, ultimately providing a living for thousands of people. The *jatra* is the most successful commercially. Its star actors draw more than any other professional actor in the theatrical centre of Kolkata.

Popular in North India are the *putliwalas* (“puppeteers”) of Rajasthan, who operate marionettes made of wood and bright-coloured cloth. The puppet plays deal with kings, lovers, bandits, and princesses of the Mughal period. Generally, the puppeteer and his nephew or son operate the strings from behind, while the puppeteer’s wife sits on her haunches in front of the miniature stage playing the drums and commenting on the action.

The puppeteer chirps, whimpers, and squeals in animal–bird voices and creates battles and tragic moments, expresses pathos, anger, and laughter. In Andhra Pradesh the puppets, called *tholu bommalata* (“the dance of leather dolls”), are fashioned of translucent, coloured leather. These are projected on a small screen, like colour photographic transparencies. Animals, birds, gods, and demons dominate the screen. The puppeteer manipulates them from behind with two sticks. Strong lamps are arranged so that the size, position, and angle of the puppets change with the distance of the light. They are similar to the *wayang kulit* puppets of Indonesia but are much smaller and quicker-moving.

In the absence of a powerful Indian city theatre (with the exception of a few in Kolkata, Mumbai, and Tamil Nadu), folk theatre has kept the rural audiences entertained for centuries and has played an important part in the growth of modern theatres in different languages. The 19th-century dramatist Bharatendu Harishchandra, who was responsible for the birth of Hindi drama, used folk conventions—the opening prayer song, tableaux, comic interludes, duets, stylized speech—and combined these with Western theatrical forms in vogue at that time. Parsi companies adapted the popular folk techniques for their extravaganzas and were a major influence until the 1930s. Rabindranath Tagore, rejecting the heavy sets and realistic decor of the commercial companies, created a lyrical theatre of the imagination. Much influenced by the *baul* singers and folk actors of Bengal, he introduced the Singing Bairagi and the Wandering Poet (similar to the *vivek* of the *jatra*) in his dramas. In the late 20th century, folk theatre came to be viewed as a form that can add colour and vitality to contemporary theatre.

Modern theatre

Modern Indian theatre first developed in Bengal at the end of the 18th century as a result of Western influence. The other regional theatres more or less followed Bengal’s pattern, and within the next 100 years they took the same meandering path, though they never achieved the same robust growth.

The British conquered Bengal in 1757 and influenced local arts by their educational and political systems. Their clubs performed Shakespeare, Molière, and Restoration comedies, introducing Western dramatic structure and the proscenium stage to the Indian intelligentsia. With the help of Golak Nath Dass, a local linguist, Gerasim Lebedev, a Russian bandmaster in a British military unit, produced the first Bengali play, *Chhadmabes* (“The Disguise”), in 1795 on a Western-style stage with Bengali players of both sexes. Subsequently, Bengali playwrights began synthesizing Western styles with their own folk and Sanskrit heritage. With growing national consciousness, theatre became a platform for social reform and propaganda against British rule. Among the most important playwrights were Michael Madhu Sudan (1824–73), Dina Bandhu Mitra (1843–87), Girish Chandra Ghosh (1844–1912), and D.L. Roy (1863–1913).

The success of Dina Bandhu Mitra's *Nildarpan* ("Mirror of the Indigo"), dealing with the tyranny of the British indigo planters over the rural Bengali farm labourers, paved the way for professional theatre. The actor-director-writer Girish Chandra Ghosh founded in 1872 the National Theatre, the first Bengali professional company, and took *Nildarpan* on tour, giving performances in the North Indian cities of Delhi and Lucknow. The instigatory speeches and lurid scenes of British brutality resulted in the banning of this production. To overcome censorship difficulties, playwrights turned to historical and mythological themes with veiled symbolism that was clearly understood by Indian audiences. The heroes and villains of these plays came to represent the Indian freedom fighter against the British oppressor. Girish's historical tragedies *Mir Qasim* (1906), *Chhatrapati* (1907), and *Sirajuddaulah* (1909) bring out the tragic grandeur of heroes who fail because of some inner weakness or betrayal of their colleagues. D.L. Roy emphasized the same aspect of nationalism in his historical dramas *Mebarapatan* (The Fall of Mebar), *Shahjahan* (1910), and *Chandragupta* (1911).

Girish introduced professional efficiency and showmanship. His style of acting was flamboyant, with fiery grace. Actors such as Amar Datta and Dani Babu carried his style into the early 1920s. The acting and production methods of the Star, the Minerva, and the Manmohan Theatres (all professional) were modelled on Girish's pioneer work.

The first elements of realism were introduced in the 1920s by Sisir Kumar Bhaduri, Naresh Mitra, Ahindra Chowdhuri, and Durga Das Banerji, together with the actresses Probha Devi and Kanka Vati. In his Srirangam Theatre (closed in 1954), Sisir performed two most memorable roles: the again Mughal emperor Aurangzeb and the shrewd Hindu philosopher-politician Chanakya. Sisir's style was refined by actor-director Sombhu Mitra and his actress wife Tripti, who worked in the Left-wing People's Theatre movement in the 1940s. With other actors they founded the Bahurupee group in 1949 and produced many Tagore plays including *Rakta Karabi* ("Red Oleanders") and *Bisarjan* ("Sacrifice").

Rabindranath Tagore (1861–1941), steeped in Hindu classics and indigenous folk forms but responsive to European techniques of production, evolved a dramatic form quite different from those of his contemporaries. He directed and acted in his plays along with his cousins, nephews, and students. These productions were staged mostly at his school, Santiniketan, in Bengal as a nonprofessional and experimental theatre. The Calcutta (Kolkata) elite and foreign visitors were attracted to these performances.

A painter, musician, actor, and poet, Tagore combined these talents in his productions. He used music and dance as essential elements in his latter years and created the novel opera-dance form in which a chorus sat on the stage and sang while the players acted out their roles in dance and stylized movements. Sometimes Tagore himself sat on a stool acting as the *sutra-dhara* and chanted to the accompaniment of music and drum as the dancing players became visual moving pictures.

In northern and western India, theatre developed in the latter half of the 19th century. The Bombay Parsi companies, using Hindi and Urdu, toured all over India. Their spectacular showmanship, based on a dramatic structure of five acts with songs, dances, comic scenes, and declamatory acting, was copied by regional theatres. The Maharashtrian theatre, founded in 1843 by Visnudas Bhave, a singer-composer-wood-carver in the court of the Raja of Sangli, was developed by powerful dramatists such as Khadilkar and Gadkari, who emphasized Maratha nationalism. The acting style in Maharashtrian theatre remained melodramatic, passionately arousing audiences to laughter or tears.

In the south the popularity of dance-dramas has limited the growth of theatrical realism. Tamil commercial companies with their song and dance extravaganzas have dominated Andhra Pradesh, Kerala, and Mysore. One of the most outstanding Tamil companies in the second half of the 20th century was the T.K.S. Brothers of Madras (Chennai), famous for trick scenes and gorgeous settings. Also a pioneer of realistic Tamil theatre was the actor-producer-proprietor Nawab Rajamanickam Pillai, who specialized in mythological plays with an all-male cast, using horses, chariots, processions, replicas of temples, and even elephants.

Urdu and Hindi drama began with the production of *Indrasabha* by Nawab Wajid Ali Shah in 1855 and was developed by the Parsi theatrical companies until the 1930s.

Parsi theatre was an amalgam of European techniques and local classical forms, folk dramas, farces, and pageants. Mythical titans thundered on the stage. Devils soared in the air, daggers flew, thrones moved, and heroes jumped from high palace walls. Vampire pits, the painted back cloth of a generalized scene, and mechanical devices to operate flying figures were direct copies of the 19th-century Lyceum melodramas and Drury Lane spectacles in London.

The star film actor Prithvi Raj Kapoor founded Prithvi Theatres in Bombay (Mumbai) in 1944 and brought robust realism to Hindi drama, then closed down in 1960 with a sense of completion after many tours throughout India. Prithvi's sons, nephews, and old associates worked in his large company, which became a training centre for many actors who later joined the films. Among these was the outstanding stage actress Zohra Sehgal, a former dance partner of Uday Shankar in the 1930s who had tremendous emotional depth and range, rare in actresses on the Hindi stage. Out of Prithvi's eight productions, in which he always played the lead, the most successful was *Pathan* (1946), which ran for 558 nights. It deals with the friendship between a tribal Muslim leader and a Hindu administrator and is set in the rugged frontier from which Prithvi came. This tragedy of two archetypes in which the tribal leader sacrifices his son to save the life of his friend's son had intensity of action, smoldering passion, and unity of mood and achieved the highest quality of realism on the Hindi stage to this day.

Among the actors who molded regional-language theatres are Shri Narayan Rao Rajhans (popularly known as the Bala Gandharva of the Maharashtra stage), Jayashankar Bhojak Sundari of Gujarat, and Sthanam Narasimhrao of Andhra. All three specialized in female roles and were star attractions during the first quarter of the 20th century.

In the second half of the 20th century, two outstanding actor-directors were Ebrahim Alkazi, director of the National School of Drama in New Delhi, and Utpal Dutt, who founded the Calcutta Little Theatre Group in 1947, which originally performed plays in English and in 1954 changed to productions in Bengali. Dutt was an actor fully committed to the revolutionary ideology of the Chinese communist leader Mao Zedong. He acted on open-air stages in rural areas of Bengal, where he exerted a strong artistic and political influence.

Since Lebedev in 1795 there has been a continuous stream of Western-trained actors and producers who have been revitalizing regional-language theatrical groups. Nawab Wajid Ali Shah had visiting French opera composers in his mid-19th-century court. Tagore did his first opera, *Valmiki Pratibha* ("The Genius of Valmiki"), in 1881, after returning from England, where he became familiar with Western harmonies. Prithvi Raj Kapoor, E. Alkazi, and Utpal Dutt all had their earlier training in English productions. Norah Richards, an Irish-born actress who came to the Punjab in 1911, produced in 1914 the first Punjabi play, *Dulhan* ("The Bride"), written by her pupil I.C. Nanda. For 50 years she promoted rural drama and inspired actors and producers, including Prithvi Raj Kapoor.

India's genius still lies in its dance-dramas, which have a unique form based on centuries of unbroken tradition. There are very few professional theatre companies in the whole of India, but thousands of amateur productions are staged every year by organized groups. Out of this intense experimental activity, the Indians have aimed to create a national theatre that incorporates contemporary, internationally recognized techniques but retains a distinctly Indian flavour.

Many centres for theatrical training that were established in the mid-20th century have continued to operate in the 21st century, despite some name changes and mergers with other institutions. Among the most important of these are the National School of Drama in New Delhi, Sangeet Natak Akademi (National Academy of Music, Dance, and Drama) in New Delhi, and the National Institute for the Performing Arts in Mumbai. Bharatiya Natya Sangh, the union of all Indian theatre groups, was founded in 1949 and is centered in New Delhi. Affiliated with UNESCO's branch of the International Theatre Institute, it organizes drama festivals and seminars, as well as serving as a centre for information.

Sri Lanka

The ritualistic dances of Sri Lanka (Ceylon) have attained world fame for their mystical beauty. Literary drama has not flourished, because the monks of predominantly Buddhist Sri Lanka shunned theatre. Dramatic activity found expression in exorcism ceremonies and

masked dramas that employed mime, song, dance, acrobatics, and bits of prose dialogue. Heavily influenced by India, Sri Lanka's Kandyan dance and *kolam* plays have South Indian origins. But over the centuries these have been transformed and now have a distinctly Sri Lankan character.

It is difficult to divide Sri Lankan performing arts into dance and drama, because a *kolam* play uses dance and song, and the devil dance has bits of improvised prose dialogue.

Dance

Tovil dance

The Buddhists of Sri Lanka believe in supernatural beings and the healing power of magical rites. Their dancing for *tovil* (healing and purification ceremonies) is the expression, however, of pre-Buddhist beliefs.

The *tovil* rituals embrace a number of dances and activities performed to cure a person gripped by disease, dementia, or misfortune that is caused by some malignant spirit; the ceremonies are also intended to propitiate demons and deities and to bring good fortune. The dancers belong to a lower-caste community, and they are professional. During their performance the patient lies to one side. Several palm-leaf shrines are constructed outside the patient's house, each dedicated to a particular demon to lure it into the arena. The role of the Vesamuni, king of all demons, is played by the chief exorcist.

Three types of supernatural beings have to be appeased: demons, deities, and others that are half demon, half deity. The most terrible is Riri Yakka (Demon of Blood), who inhabits cremation grounds and graveyards and rides a pig. His belly is smeared with blood, and he has a monkey's face and four clawed hands that hold a parrot, a sword, a rooster, and a human head.

The dancers, all men, each wear around their heads a red cloth fringed with long ribbons of palm leaves hanging down like hair, a strip of cloth around their chests, 22 yards (20 metres) of thin white cloth wound so skillfully around their hips that it never comes loose during an entire night of violent activity, and clusters of bells fitted around their calves to make a deafening jingle. Their appearance is half female, half male.

The dance is punctuated by little pieces of mime and magical actions, with drummers pounding to the accompaniment of a chorus of singers. The climax is reached when the dancers, holding flaming torches in both hands, whirl and spin, forming circles of fire around themselves. The flames lick their bodies, but they remain unsinged. The dancers leap and dive through the air in seeming defiance of gravity. In this surcharged atmosphere they pause to put on masks representing various demons. These have frightening expressions. They romp and stomp in circles, describing their identity and the purpose of their visit. The particular demon associated with the malady enters the patient's body. The chief exorcist

questions, threatens, tortures, beseeches, and offers bribes to appease the demon until it finally leaves and its victim is healed.

The *sanni yakku* dance, exorcising the disease demon, has a series of humorous impersonations. One is of the demon as a beautiful woman, then as a pregnant woman, and finally as a mother. The exorcists ask questions about her pregnancy, and she lists all the respectable men of the village.

Out of many *tovil* dance ceremonies, the most picturesque and important are the *kohomba kankariya* (or “ritual of the god Kohomba”), performed to ensure prosperity and to rout pestilence, and the *bali*, danced to propitiate the heavenly beings.

***Kandyan* dance**

The *kandyan* dance is highly sophisticated and refined. It flourished under the Kandyan kings from the 16th through the 19th centuries, and today it is considered the national dance of Sri Lanka. It has four distinct varieties: The *pantheru*, *naiyadi*, *udekki*, and *ves* (the most artistic and renowned). Its energetic movements and postures are reminiscent of India’s *kathakali*. Besides the above four styles, there are 18 *vannamas* (dance enactments) including the *gajaga vannama*, depicting the elephant; the *hanuma vannama*, the monkey; and the *mayura vannama*, the peacock. These beautiful animal movements and abstract impersonations have been distilled and perfected over several hundred years.

Hindu mythological themes were originally the subjects of *kandyan* dances, the most popular being Rama’s crossing over to Lanka with the help of his monkey general and his reunion with Sita. Gradually, stories of kings and legendary heroes and mimes of birds and forest beasts were introduced. The Kandyan kings elevated the dance to such beauty and skill that the Buddhists began admitting it into their temple courtyards as a tribute to the glory of their religion. It became a part of the annual August Perahera festival, in which a procession of gilded elephants, palanquins, saffron-robed monks, drummers, and chanters move majestically to the Temple of the Tooth in Kandy, where the Buddha’s tooth is enshrined. The *kandyan* dancers are a glittering attraction as they perform en route to the temple.

A *kandyan* dancer wears a pagoda-like conical silver headpiece with glistening forehead fringe and huge earpieces, many-stranded bead necklaces of silver and ivory across his torso, beaten-silver epaulets on his biceps, and hollow silver anklets filled with silver beads to make them rattle. He spins with sudden leaps and reaches violent climaxes of geometric patterns, articulated with sudden right and left turns of his head. When telling a story, he sings descriptive passages and enacts them with spurts of dancing.

Masked drama

Out of the four folk-drama forms—*kolam*, *sokari*, *nadagam*, and *pasu*—the most highly developed and significant is the *kolam*, in which actors wear brightly painted and intricately carved wooden masks. The word *kolam* is of Tamil origin and means “costume,” “impersonation,” or “guise.” The performance consists of the masked representation of many isolated characters, such as kings, demons, deities, hunters, animals and birds, the washerman, the police constable, a pregnant woman—a British Museum manuscript concerning the *kolam* lists 53 such characters. The most terrifying masks are of the demons, with twisted faces, protruding tusks, and cavelike nostrils for snorting fury. The *naga* demon has a long, flaming, red tongue and dozens of cobras writhing around his head. Some old masks have only one large bulging eye, with a cobra hissing out from one nostril. The design of these masks uses five basic colours—red, blue, yellow, green, and black, the last two for lower-rank characters. Exaggerated comicality, distortions, bulges, nightmarish whimsy, bright colours, and the artful carving of the masks continue to entertain audiences in the 21st century.

The *kolam* is performed once a year for seven to 10 nights, starting at night after dinner and lasting through the early hours of the morning. The performance is generally held in the open courtyard of a house, to the accompaniment of two drummers, an instrumentalist, and a singing chorus with leader. After songs in praise of the Buddha and others (including the patron of the show), the *sabhapati* (master of ceremonies) describes the origin of *kolam*—how an Indian king’s pregnant wife expressed a desire to see a masked dance-drama and how a troupe was invited from a distant court. The *sabhapati* then introduces the masked characters as they enter and describes their various vocations and backgrounds.

Out of many, two plays are especially famous: the *Sandakinduru Katava* and the *Gothayimbala Katava*. The former deals with the legendary idyllic love between a half-human, half-bird couple singing and dancing in a forest. The King of Banaras comes hunting and, attracted by the beautiful Kinduri, kills her husband and makes advances to her. Rejected, he is ready to kill her when the Buddha appears and brings her husband back to life. In the *Gothayimbala Katava* the beautiful wife of the warrior Gothayimbala bathing in a pond attracts the attention of a demon, who falls in love with her. The enraged husband comes and chops off the demon’s head, which, because of its magical power, reunites itself with the body every time it is cut off. Finally, the forest deity comes and rescues the warrior.

The recorded history of *kolam* is not very old. There is only one known early eye witness account of *kolam*, that of John Callaway, who in 1829 published 185 verses of a play with a description of the performance and some sketches of the masks and a brief introduction concerning the masquerade. According to Callaway, the dancers did not sing. The chanters described the characters in the third person and sometimes exclaimed to draw the attention of the audience to a particular action. The earliest *kolam* text is preserved in the Colombo National Museum on palm leaves; another is in the British Museum inscribed on paper. The oldest printed text, edited in 1895 by A.G. Perera, is in the Colombo National Museum Library.

Masks are made of the light woods *kaduru* (*Strychnos nux vomica*) and *ruk-attana* (*Alstonia scholaris*) and after 50 years start decaying; consequently, the earlier masks are no longer in existence.

There has been an important revival of interest in drama in Sri Lanka since the mid-20th century. E.R. Sarachchandra, a scholar of traditional Sri Lankan theatre, was responsible for a major breakthrough in revitalizing and adapting for the modern stage traditional dramatic forms such as the *kolam*. New playwrights also helped revitalize Sri Lankan theatre, among the most significant of whom was Henry Jayasena. A producer-writer-actor, Jayasena wrote and staged plays in Sinhalese and translations of foreign plays, remaining active in his field until his death in 2009.

Dance and theatre in Kashmir

The Vale of Kashmir, predominantly populated by Muslims, has remained aloof from the main cultural currents of India. The ancient caves and temples of Kashmir, however, reveal a strong link with Indian culture at the beginning of the Common Era. At one time the classical dances of the south are believed to have been practiced. When Islam was introduced, in the 14th century, dancing and theatrical arts were suppressed, being contrary to a strict interpretation of the Qur'ān. These arts survived only in folk forms and were performed principally at marriage ceremonies. The popular *hafiza* dance performed by Kashmiri women at weddings and festivals to the accompaniment of *sufiana kalam* (devotional music of the Muslim mystics known as Sufis) was banned in the 1920s by the ruling maharaja, who felt this dance was becoming too sensual. It was replaced by the *bacha nagma*, performed by young boys dressed like women. A popular entertainment at parties and festivals, it is also customarily included in modern stage plays.

Theatrical productions in Kashmir are generally offered irregularly by amateur troupes. There is, however, the *bhand jashna* ("festival of clowns"), a centuries-old genre of folk theatre. Performed in village squares, it satirizes social situations through dance, music and clowning.

The Kashmiri-language theatre was founded in 1947, when a new national consciousness, the aftermath of the independence of the Indian subcontinent from Britain, inspired playwrights and folk actors to dramatize topical events and create a "visual newspaper" for the people. Some theatrical presentations carried a political agenda, such as the left-wing propaganda plays *Zamin Sanz* ("Who Owns the Land?") and *Jangbaaz* ("The Warmonger"). Especially notable among those who have written for the stage has been the poet Nadim, author of two operas, *Bambur-yambarzal* (*The Bumblebee*) and *Himal Nagraj* (*The Beautiful Woman and the Snake Prince*).

Since the 1960s the Jammu and Kashmir Academy of Art, Culture, and Languages has promoted theatre in the Kashmiri and Dogri languages, with an emphasis on literary dramas

and folk-dance festivals of regional appeal.

Pakistan

The performing arts have generally been discouraged by the Muslim authorities in Pakistan, with the result that there is no Arab or Persian classical theatre. The only possible sources of drama were the Persian passion plays dealing with the martyrdom of Ḥuysayn (grandson of Muhammad) in the desert of Karbalā' in 680 CE, which have inspired some Urdu playwrights. Pakistan, a Muslim country, therefore either had to find a theatrical heritage in Urdu and Bengali theatre, which had been flourishing in India long before the partition, or look to the West. It did both. The Urdu-language theatre of Pakistan had started in the Lucknow court of Nawab Wajid Ali Shah in 1855 and was nurtured by both Muslim and Hindu artists. In Pakistan the *kathak* style is preferred because of its strong Muslim flavour and Mughal court associations. Cut off from Hinduism and its lore, Pakistani performers use these Indian classical dance styles to interpret the national aspirations, while their folk dances express the character of Pakistan's rural culture.

Folk dance

Pakistan's dances are vibrant and explosive. *Bhangra* and *khattak* are the most popular. *Khattak* is a dance of the tribal Pashtuns, who traditionally inhabit the rugged hills of the northwest. It originated in zealous preparations for raids and celebrations of victories. In the 21st century any joyous event may be the occasion for this community dance. The Pashtuns, dressed in baggy *salwars*, embroidered waistcoats, and skullcapped turbans, perform it holding a rifle in both hands. They energetically spin and somersault, float and whirl, with sudden bursts of swordplay to the accompaniment of drums and pipes. Because of its popularity, *khattak* is presented to visiting dignitaries and for this purpose has been refined into choreographed productions.

Important dances by women are the *sammi*, *kikli*, *giddha*, and *luddi*. Except for the *sammi*, which has a slow rhythm accompanied by a sad song because of its association with the tragic love legend of Princess Sammi and Prince Dhola, all the other forms are charged with energy and fast rhythms. The *kikli* is performed by girls and young women in groups of two. The partners cross their arms, clasp hands, and stretch backward and whirl. The *giddha* is danced in a circle, the participants keeping the rhythm by clapping their hands. Two women impulsively leave the circle, jump into the centre, and perform a hilarious mimetic dance enacting a *boli* (two-line song) and again join the circle to dance in a ring and allow another couple to take the centre. In the *luddi*, women click their fingers and clap their hands, moving in a circle by jumps and half-turns and accelerating their rhythm by stamping their feet.

Performing arts in the Punjab

Punjabi performing arts emphasize love stories, vigorous dancing, and humour. The *mirasis* (professional wits), *naqalias* (mummers), and *domanis* (female singer-actresses) are professional performers belonging to the lower classes. They exploit all the tricks of exaggeration, absurdity, malapropism, comic gags, and lewd references. In the performance of a *naqal* (comic sketch), two people constitute a troupe. The leader holds a leather folder and slaps his foolish partner, who leads his master to a hilarious situation through absurd replies. Expert in mime and clowning, these character types are distantly related to the Western court fool and the commedia dell'arte.

Theatre in Pakistan

Urdu theatre grew out of a spectacular production of *Indrasabha* (“The Heavenly Court of Indra”), an operatic drama written by the poet Agha Hasan Amanat and produced in 1855 in the palace courtyard of the last nawab of Oudh, Wajid Ali Shah. The story deals with the love of a fairy and Prince Gulfam. The fairy takes her lover to heaven where the angry and jealous Indra hurls him down to earth. Finally, the fairy, through her songs and dances, wins the heart of Indra, and the two lovers are united. Wajid Ali Shah, an expert *kathak* dancer and author of many valuable treatises on stage techniques, composed some of the melodies and dances for his production and used folk conventions, gorgeous costumes, elaborate settings, and gold-inlaid masks. *Indrasabha* was a fantastic success; it was translated into almost all the regional languages, with many local variants. Its characters—Sabaz Pari (Green Fairy), Kala Deo (Black Devil), Lal Deo (Red Devil)—became a part of the theatrical vocabulary of the subcontinent.

Parsi theatre

During the second half of the 19th century, Urdu was the main spoken and written language of the northern half of the subcontinent and understood in almost all the principal cities. The Parsis (originally Zoroastrians from Iran who settled on the coast of Mumbai [Bombay]), comprising a wealthy community with sharp business acumen, were the pioneers in establishing a commercial theatre that lasted from 1873 to 1935 and influenced all the other regional theatres. Though located mainly in Bombay and Calcutta, the Parsi companies toured the subcontinent with huge staffs, sets, and an army of players.

The best-known playwright of this period is Agha Hashr (1876–1935), a poet-dramatist of flamboyant imagination and superb craftsmanship. Among his famous plays are *Sita Banbas*, based on an incident from the *Ramayana*; *Bilwa Mangal*, a social play on the life of a poet, whose blind passion for a prostitute results in remorse; and *Aankh ka Nasha* (“The Witchery of the Eyes”), about the treachery of a prostitute’s love, with realistic dialogue of a brothel. Many of Hashr’s plays were adapted from Shakespeare: *Sufayd Khūn* (“White Blood”) was modelled on *King Lear*, and *Khūn-e Nāḥaq* (“The Innocent Murder”) on *Hamlet*. His last play, *Rustam-o-Sohrab*, the tragic story of two legendary Persian heroes, Rustam and his son Sohrab, is a drama of passion and fatal irony.

Productions by Parsi theatrical companies were large-budgeted affairs. Plays opened with the actors in full makeup and costume, their hands folded and eyes closed, singing a prayer song in praise of some deity, and generally ended in a tableau. Sometimes at curtain call the director rearranged the tableau in a split second and offered a variant. Actors were required to know singing, dancing, music, acrobatics, and fencing and to possess strong voices and good physical bearing. In improvised auditoriums with poor acoustics and packed with more than 2,000 people, actors' voices reached the farthest spectator. Plays began at 10 o'clock and lasted until dawn, moving from comedy to tragedy, from pathos to farce, from songs to the rattle of swords, all interspersed with moral lessons and rhyming epigrams. The droll humour and realism of the comic interludes have had few rivals in contemporary Urdu drama. Important playwrights of this period were Narain Prasad Betab, Mian Zarif, and Munshi Mohammed Dil of Lucknow. All took inspiration from Hindu mythology and Persian legends, transforming these tales into powerful dramas.

Imtiaz Ali Taj (1900–70) was a bridge between Agha Hashr and contemporary Pakistani playwrights. His *Anarkali* (1922), the tragic love story of a harem girl, Anarkali, and Crown Prince Salim (son of Akbar the Great), unfolds the love-hate relationship of a domineering emperor and his rebellious son. Brilliant in treatment and character analysis, this play has been staged hundreds of times by amateur groups and has entered the list of Urdu classics.

In the absence of a professional company, Urdu theatre has found it difficult to strike roots. After 1947 many Muslim actors and writers were absorbed by the Indian film industry in Mumbai, and they found it difficult to adjust their great talent to amateur theatrical clubs. All the same, plays have been staged in Karāchi, Lahore, and Rawalpindi. The best productions have been those dealing with topical themes—refugee problems, new adjustments, corruption, the Kashmir issue, and other sociopolitical matters. Agha Babar in Rawalpindi produced *Burra Sahib* (1961; “The Big Boss”), an adaptation of Gogol’s *Government Inspector*, setting it in Pakistan. *Tere Kuce se Jub Hum Nikle* (“Thrown Out of Your Lane”), by Naseer Shamshi, describes the pathetic condition of an aristocratic family in Delhi that is forced to leave home because of communal riots. In *Lal Qile se Lalukhet Tak* (“From the Red Fort to Lalukhet”), by Khwajah Moinuddin, the comedy arises out of the pitiable condition of the refugees who leave their well-settled existence in Delhi dreaming of prosperity, take a tedious journey, and arrive homeless in Karāchi to find shelter in thatched hovels. Ali Ahmed, an avant-garde actor-director in Karāchi, presents his plays with polished stagecraft and esoteric appeal.

Lahore remains the centre of amateur theatre based on the tradition of the late directors A.S. Bokhari and G.D. Sondhi, both former principals of the Government College in Lahore. In 1942 G.D. Sondhi built the Open-Air Theatre, situated on a small artificial hillock in the Lawrence Gardens, one of the finest in all of South Asia. It has remained the centre of dramatic contests and festivals and is a favourite of visiting dancers and actors.

The actor-playwright Rafi Peerzada, with his knowledge of Western theatre as a result of his training in Berlin in the 1930s, helped to develop Pakistani theatre. Professional in approach, he produced radio and stage plays and was a critical colleague of A.S. Bokhari and Imtiaz in the revival of amateur theatre.

Radio and television plays

Plays are being written for radio and television that are readily adaptable for the stage, and vice versa. Saadat Hasan Manto (1912–55), one of the greatest writers of short stories and author of over 100 radio plays and features, remains a model for 21st-century writers for plot construction, bitter realism, and whimsical dialogue. His collection of plays (1942–45), including *Manto ke Dramay* (“Manto’s Plays”), *Ao* (“Come”), and *Teen Aurten* (“Three Women”), have flashes of the then-unborn Theatre of the Absurd.

Bangladesh

East Bengal continued the folk *jatra* and used this form for themes concerning current political problems and historical events. A successful example of the latter is *Nawab Sirajuddaulah*, which deals with the fall of the last Muslim ruler of Bengal in 1757 through betrayal by his ambitious brother-in-law Mīr Jāfar, who joined the British. This *jatra* is popular with both rural and urban audiences. Tales of Muslim kings and lovers from Persian legends also have been rendered into *jatras*.

Contemporary theatre inherits the tradition of the prepartition Bengali stage. The poet-playwright Nazrul Islam followed the tradition of Tagore’s verse plays and dance operas. Inspired by left-wing ideology, he wrote for the People’s Theatre in East Bengal, championing the cause of the poor farmer. He dealt with psychological problems and inner tensions in his *Shilpi* (“The Artist”), in which the artist is torn between love for his wife and for his art. Especially popular are historical themes of political significance, inspiring Muslims who for centuries were subjugated by the Hindus of East Bengal. Ebrahim Khan wrote *Kamal Pasha* (1926), a play about the Turkish liberator, a symbol of hope and reawakening, and *Anwar Pasha*, about the downfall of Anwar (Enver), who could not cope with the new historical forces.

Bangladesh has a solid acting tradition and a rich repertoire of Bengali plays. Its stage has professional actors, and it retains the impassioned lyricism and power of the mainstream of Bengali tradition.

Balwant Gargi The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica

Visual arts of India and Sri Lanka (Ceylon)

Indian art is the term commonly used to designate the art of the Indian subcontinent, which includes the present political divisions of India, Kashmir, Pakistan, and Bangladesh. Although a relationship between political history and the history of Indian art before the

advent of Islām is at best problematical, a brief review will provide a broad context. The earliest urban culture of the subcontinent is represented by the Indus Valley civilization (c. 2500–1800 BC), which possessed several flourishing cities not only in the Indus Valley but also in Gujarāt and Rājasthān. The circumstances in which this culture came to an end are obscure. Although there is no clear proof of historical continuity, scholars have noticed several striking similarities between this early culture and features of later Indian civilization. The period immediately following the urban Indus Valley civilization is marked by a variety of essentially rural cultures. A second urbanization began to occur only around the 6th century BC, when flourishing cities started to reappear, particularly in the Gangetic Basin. The Buddha lived and preached in this period, which culminated in the great Maurya Empire, whose relatively few works are the earliest surviving remnants of monumental art. The Maurya dynast Aśoka (died 238 BC) is considered the greatest of Buddhist kings; and the majority of the monuments of the next 500 years appear to be dedicated to the Buddhist faith, though iconographical and other details suggest that the art also drew heavily on popular religion.

The Maurya Empire spread over almost all of what is modern India and Pakistan. Territories as extensive were never possessed by any other dynasty. With its fall, the empire broke up into a number of states ruled by many dynasties, some of which acquired considerable power and fame for varying periods of time. Among these, the Śuṅgas (c. 2nd–1st century BC) in the north and the longer-lived Sātavāhanas in the Deccan and the south are particularly noteworthy. Though these kings were Hindu by religion, Buddhist monuments form the great majority of surviving works.

Toward the end of the 1st century BC, northern India was subjected to a series of invasions by Scythian tribes, resulting finally in the establishment of the vast Kushān (Kuṣāṇa) empire, of which Mathurā was an important centre. The new rulers seemed to have followed Indian faiths, the great emperor Kaniṣka (c. AD 78) being a devout Buddhist. The schools of Gandhāra and Mathurā flourished during their rule, and, though much of the work is dedicated to the Buddhist religion, the foundations of later Hindu iconography were also laid in this period. While the Kushān dynasty was sovereign in the north, the Sātavāhanas continued to rule in the south. The bulk of the work at Amarāvātī was produced during their hegemony.

Around the mid-4th century, the Gupta dynasty, of indigenous origin, rapidly expanded its power, uprooting the last remnants of foreign rule and succeeding in bringing almost all of northern India under its sway. In the Deccan there arose at the same time the equally powerful Vākātakas, with whom the Guptas appear to have had friendly relations. The period extending from the 4th through the 5th centuries is marked by the most flourishing artistic activities. In addition to the Buddhist monuments, there are the first strong indications of specifically Hindu patronage. Works of remarkable beauty and elegance were produced in this period, which is commonly called the Golden Age of India.

The disintegration of these two empires toward the close of the 5th and the 6th centuries ushered in what has been called the medieval period (c. 8th–12th centuries), marked by the appearance of a large number of states and dynasties, often at war with each other. Their rise to power and their decline was part of a constantly recurring process, for none of them was able to hold onto a position of even relative paramountcy for any extended period of time. In the north, the great dynasties were the Gurjara-Pratihāras, whose empire at its greatest equalled that of the Guptas; the Pālas, who ruled chiefly over northeastern India; and various other dynasties, such as the Kalacuris, the Candelas, and the Paramāras of north central India, the Cāhamānas of Rājasthān, the Cālukyas of Gujarāt. In the Deccan, also, several dynasties rose and fell, the most powerful of which were the Cālukyas of Bādāmi, the Rāṣṭrakūṭas, and the Cālukyas of Kalyāṇī. They were often at war not only with their powerful neighbours to the north but also with the great Pallava and Cōla kingdoms of southern India. Most of the dynasties of medieval India were Hindu, though some Jaina and a very few Buddhist kings are also known. The various faiths, however, existed in comparative harmony; and Buddhist and Jaina monuments continued to be built, though most of the surviving works are Hindu.

Although the effects of constant struggle were not as devastating as one might expect, largely as a result of the institutionalization of war and its confinement to appropriate castes, the Hindu kingdoms fell easy prey to the Islāmic invasions, which began as early as the 8th century AD but gathered strength only in the 11th century. By the end of the 12th century, almost all of northern India had been conquered. Islāmic advances in the south were checked for a while by the Vijayanagara dynasty, but with its collapse almost all of India fell under various degrees of Islāmic hegemony. Large Hindu kingdoms enjoying differing degrees of independence continued to exist chiefly in Rājasthān and portions of southern India, but overall political supremacy was vested with the Islāmic states. The Muslim powers were also divided into many kingdoms, despite attempts made by the sultanate of Delhi, and later by the Mughals, to achieve paramountcy over large portions of India. These attempts were successful only for short periods of time. Although the initial impact of Islām on Indian art was generally destructive, Islāmic influences entering India were gradually transformed in the new environment and eventually resulted in the flowering of an extremely rich and important aspect of the Indian genius.

The ascendancy of the European powers in the 18th century, culminating in the establishment of the British Empire, laid the foundation of modern India's contacts with the West. As a whole, the European advent was marked by a relative insensitivity to native art traditions, but rising nationalism attempted a conscious revival of Indian art toward the end of the 19th century. In modern times, the absorption of European influence is a more natural, freer process that affects artistic development in a vital and profound way.

General characteristics of Indian art

The unity of Indian art

Indian art is spread over a subcontinent and has a long, very productive history; but it nevertheless shows a remarkable unity and consistency. Works produced in the several geographical and cultural regions possess decidedly individual characteristics but at the same time have sufficient elements in common to justify their being considered manifestations of a general style. The existence of this style is evidence of the essential cultural unity of the subcontinent and to the uninterrupted contact between the various geographical units, at least from the historical period onward. Developments in one area have been quickly reflected in the others. The regional idioms have contributed to the richness of Indian art, and the mutual influences exercised by them have been responsible for the multi-faceted development of that art throughout the course of its long life.

The style of Indian art is largely determined not by a dynasty but by conditions of time and space. It has, essentially, a geographical rather than a dynastic basis, which is to say that the evolution of regional schools appears to have been largely independent of any particular dynasty that happened to rule over a specific region. The style does not change because of the conquest of one area by another dynasty; rather the influences exercised by one area on another are usually through the agency of factors other than conquest. Instances in which dynastic patronage changed the nature of a style are very few and confined mostly to the Islāmic period. The political history of India is itself quite vague, and the areas in possession of a dynasty at various points in its history are even less susceptible to precise definition. For all these reasons, the classification of Indian art adopted here is not based on dynasties, for such a division has little meaning. Nevertheless, names of certain dynasties are used, for these have passed into common usage. When this is done, however, the name must be understood as little more than a convenient way of labelling a particular period.

The materials of Indian art

Indian art employs various materials, such as wood, brick, clay, stone, and metal. Most wooden monuments of the early period have perished but have been imitated in stone. Clay and brick were also abundantly used; but, particularly in later times, the favoured material seems to have been stone, in the dressing (facing and smoothing) and carving of which the Indian artist attained great excellence. The material may have influenced the form somewhat, but essentially Indian art tends to impose the form on the material. Thus, materials are generally regarded as interchangeable: wooden and clay forms are imitated in stone, and stone is imitated in bronze, and in turn stone sculpture assumes qualities appropriate to metal. It is as though the nature of the material presented a challenge that had to be met and overcome. At the same time, Indian art stresses the plasticity of forms; sculpture is generally characterized by emphatic mass and volume; architecture is often sculpture on a colossal scale; and the elements of painting, particularly of the early period, are modelled by line and colour.

Indian and foreign art

Thanks to its geographical situation, the Indian subcontinent has been constantly fed by artistic traditions emanating from West and Central Asia. The Indian artist has shown a remarkable capacity for accepting these foreign influences naturally and assimilating and transforming them to accord with the nature of his own style. The process occurred frequently: in the Maurya period; in the two centuries after Christ, when the Kushān dynasty attained imperial supremacy in the north; and at a much later period, in the 16th century, when the Mughals patronized a new school of architecture and painting.

Just as India received influences, so it transmitted its own art abroad, particularly to Ceylon and the countries of Southeast Asia. Developments of great importance were thereby precipitated in Ceylon, Burma, Thailand, Indonesia, and Indochina, where the reinterpretation of Indian influences resulted in the creation of works of great originality.

Indian art and religion

Indian art is religious inasmuch as it is largely dedicated to the service of one of several great religions. It may be didactic or edificatory as is the relief sculpture of the two centuries before and after Christ; or, by representing the divinity in symbolic form (whether architectural or figural), its purpose may be to induce contemplation and thereby put the worshipper in communication with the divine. Not all Indian art, however, is purely religious, and some of it is only nominally so. There were periods when humanistic currents flowed strongly under the guise of edificatory or contemplative imagery, the art inspired by and delighting in the life of this world.

Although Indian art is religious, there is no such thing as a sectarian Hindu or Buddhist art, for style is a function of time and place and not of religion. Thus it is not strictly correct to speak of Hindu or Buddhist art, but, rather, of Indian art that happens to render Hindu or Buddhist themes. For example, an image of Vishnu and an image of Buddha of the same period are stylistically the same, religion having little to do with the mode of artistic expression. Nor should this be surprising in view of the fact that the artists belonged to nondenominational guilds, ready to lend their services to any patron, whether Hindu, Buddhist, or Jaina.

The religious nature of Indian art accounts to some extent for its essentially symbolic and abstract nature. It scrupulously avoids illusionistic effects, evoked by imitation of the physical and ephemeral world of the senses; instead, objects are made in imitation of ideal, divine prototypes, whose source is the inner world of the mind. This attitude may account for the relative absence of portraiture and for the fact that, even when it is attempted, the emphasis is on the ideal person behind the human lineaments rather than on the physical likeness.

The artist and patron

Works of art in India were produced by artists at the behest of a patron, who might commission an object to worship for spiritual or material ends, in fulfillment of a vow, for the discharge of virtues enjoined by scripture, or even for personal glory. Once the artist received his commission, he fashioned the work of art according to his skill, gained by apprenticeship, and the written canons of his art, which possessed a holy character. There were prescribed rules for proportionate measurement, iconography, and the like, often with a symbolic significance. This is not to say that the individual artist was invariably aware of the symbolic meaning of the prescribed standards, based as these were on complex metaphysical and theological considerations; but the symbolism nevertheless formed part of the fabric of his work, ready to add an extra dimension of meaning to the initiated and knowledgeable spectator.

In these conditions it is not surprising that the artist as a person is for the most part anonymous, very few names of artists having survived. It was the skill with which the work of art was made to conform to established ideals, rather than the artist who possessed the skill, that held the place of first importance.

The appreciation of Indian art

According to Indian aesthetic theory, a work of art possesses distinct “flavours” (*rasa*), the “tasting” of which constitutes the aesthetic experience. Because the work of art operates at various levels, granting to the spectator what he is capable of receiving by virtue of his intellectual and emotional preparation, the appreciation of the beauty of form and line is considered an appropriate activity of the educated and cultured man. The supreme aesthetic experience, however, is believed to be much deeper and cognate to the experience of the Godhead. From this point of view, the work of art is in a sense irrelevant and unnecessary for a person at a high level of spiritual progress; and for the devout layman its excellence is measured by its efficacy in promoting spiritual development.

Indian architecture

The favoured material of early Indian architecture appears to have been wood, but little has survived the rigours of the climate. Wooden forms, however, affected work in other mediums and were sometimes quite literally copied, as, for example, in early cave temples of western India. The principles of wooden construction also played an important part in determining the shape of Indian architecture and its various elements and components.

Baked or sun-dried brick has a history as ancient as that of wood; among the earliest remains are buildings excavated at sites of the Indus Valley civilization. The use of brick is once again evident from about the 6th century BC, and its popularity was undiminished in subsequent centuries. Many brick monuments have been discovered, particularly in areas in which good clay was easily available, such as the Gangetic Basin. Although more durable

than wood, few brick buildings from before the 5th century AD have survived in a good state of preservation.

Traditions of stone architecture appear to be more recent than wood or brick, the earliest examples of the use of dressed stone for building purposes not predating the 6th century BC. The Indian architect, however, soon gained great proficiency in its use, and, by the 7th century AD, the use of stone for monumental buildings of considerable size had become quite popular. The preference for stone can also be seen in Islāmic monuments of India, which contrast markedly with the brick and tile structures popular in neighbouring West Asia.

Most surviving examples of Indian architecture before the Islāmic period are of a religious nature, consisting mainly of Buddhist shrines, or *stūpas*, and temples. Monastic residences give some idea of civil architecture, but, surprisingly, very few examples of palaces and secular dwellings have been found.

Indus Valley civilization (c. 2500–1800 BC)

From excavated remains, it is clear that the Indus Valley civilization possessed a flourishing urban architecture. The major cities associated with the civilization, notably Mohenjo-daro, Harappā, and Kalibangan, were laid out on a grid pattern and had provisions for an advanced drainage system. The residential buildings, which were serviceable enough, were mainly brick and consisted of an open patio flanked by rooms. For monumental architecture, the evidence is slight, the most important being a “sacred” tank (thought to be for ritual ablution) and associated structures. Corbel vaulting (arches supported by brackets projecting from the wall) was known, and, to a limited extent, timber was used together with brick; whatever architectural ornamentation existed must have been of brick or plaster.

The Maurya period (c. 321–185 BC)

The state of Indian architecture in the period between the Indus Valley civilization and the rise of the Maurya Empire is largely unknown since most work was done in such perishable material as wood or brick. Excavations at Rājgīr, Kauśāmbī, and other sites, however, testify to the existence of fortified cities with *stūpas*, monasteries, and temples of the type found at the later Maurya sites of Nagarī and Vidiśā; and there is evidence of the use of dressed stone in a palace excavated at Kauśāmbī. Considering the power of the Maurya Empire and the extensive territory it controlled, the architectural remains are remarkably few. The most important are *stūpas* (later enlarged) such as a famous example of Sānchi; the ruins of a hall excavated at the site of Kumrāhar in Patna (ancient Pāṭaliputra), the capital city; and a series of rock-cut caves in the Barābar and Nāgārjunī Hills near Gayā, which are interesting because they preserve in the more permanent rock some types of wooden buildings popular at that time.

The *stūpa*, the most typical monument of the Buddhist faith, consists essentially of a domical mound in which sacred relics are enshrined. Its origins are traced to mounds, or tumuli, raised over the buried remains of the dead that were found in India even before the rise of Buddhism: *Stūpas* appear to have had a regular architectural form in the Maurya period: the mound was sometimes provided with a parasol surrounded by a miniature railing on the top, raised on a terrace, and the whole surrounded by a large railing consisting of posts, crossbars, and a coping (the capping on the top course), all secured by tenons and mortices in a technique appropriate to craftsmanship in wood. The essential feature of the *stūpa*, however, always remained the domical mound, the other elements being optional.

Along with *stūpas* were erected roofless, or hypaethral, shrines enclosing a sacred object such as a tree or an altar. Temples of brick and timber with vaulted or domical roofs were also constructed, on plans that were generally elliptical, circular, quadrilateral, or apsidal (*i.e.*, having an apse, or semicircular plan, at the sanctum end). These structures have not survived, but some idea of their shape has been obtained from the excavated foundations and the few examples imitating wooden originals that were cut into the rock, notably the Sudāmā and the Lomas R̥ṣi caves in the Nāgārjunī and Barābar hills near Gayā. The latter has an interesting entrance showing an edged barrel-vault roof (an arch shaped like a half cylinder) in profile supported on raked pillars, the ogee arch (an arch with curving sides, concave above and convex toward the top) so formed filled with a trellis to let in light and air. The interiors of most caves are highly polished and consist of two chambers: a shrine, elliptical or circular in plan with a domed roof (Sudāmā cave); and an adjacent antechamber, roughly rectangular and provided with a barrel vault. Remains of structural buildings have been excavated at Bairāt and Vidiśā, where wood and brick shrines with timber domes and vaults once existed. A temple (No. 40) at Sānchi was apsidal in plan and perhaps had a barrel-vault roof of timber.

A hall excavated at Kumrāhar in Patna had a high wooden platform of most excellent workmanship, on which stood eight rows of 10 columns each, which once supported a second story. Only one stone pillar has been recovered, and it is circular in shape and made of sandstone that has been polished to a high lustre. The capitals that topped them must have been similar to others found in neighbouring Lohanipur and almost certainly consisted of one or two pairs of addorsed (set back to back) animals, recalling Persepolitan examples. Indeed, there is much about Maurya architecture and sculpture to suggest Iranian influence, however substantially transformed in the Indian environment.

Early Indian architecture (2nd century BC–3rd century AD)

Except for *stūpas*, architectural remains from the 2nd century BC (downfall of the Maurya dynasty) to the 4th century AD (rise of the Gupta dynasty) continue to be rare, indicating that most of the work was done in brick and timber. Once again, examples cut into the rock and closely imitating wooden forms give a fairly accurate idea of at least some types of buildings in this period.

The *stūpas* become progressively larger and more elaborate. The railings continue to imitate wooden construction and are often profusely carved, as at Bhārhut, Sānchi II, and Amarāvātī. These were also provided with elaborate gateways, consisting of posts supporting from one to three architraves, again imitating wooden forms and covered with sculpture (Bhārahut, Sānchi I, III). In the course of time an attempt was made to give height to the *stūpas* by multiplying the terraces that supported the dome and by increasing the number of parasols on top. In Gandhāra and southeastern India, particularly, sculptured decoration was extended to the *stūpa* proper, so that terraces, drums, and domes—as well as railing—were decorated with figural and ornamental sculpture in bas-relief. *Stūpas* in Gandhāra were not provided with railings but, instead, had rows of small temples arranged on a rectangular plan.

Cave temples of western India, cut into the scarp of the Western Ghāts and stretching from Gujarāt to southern Mahāāshtra, constitute the most extensive architectural remains of the period. Two main types of buildings can be distinguished, the temple proper (*caitya*) and the monastery (*vihāra*, *saṅghārāma*). The former is generally an apsidal hall with a central nave flanked by aisles. The apse is covered by a half dome; and two rows of pillars, which demarcate the nave, support a barrel-vault roof that covers the rest of the building. In the apsidal end is placed the object to be worshipped, generally a *stūpa*, the hall being meant for the gathered congregation. In front of the hall is a porch, separated from it by a screen wall provided with a door of considerable size, together with an arched opening on top clearly derived from wooden buildings of the Lomas Ṛṣi type and permitting air and dim light to filter into the interior. Other influences of wooden construction are equally striking, particularly in the vaulting ribs that cover the entire ceiling and that are sometimes actually of wood, as at Bhājā, where the pillars are also raked in imitation of the exigencies of wooden construction. The pillars are generally octagonal with a pot-shaped base and a capital of addorsed animals placed on a bell-shaped, or campaniform, lotus in the Maurya tradition. The most significant example is at Kārli, dating approximately to the closing years of the 1st century BC. The Bhājā *caitya* is certainly the earliest, and important examples are to be found at Beḍṣā, Kondane, Pītalkhorā, Ajantā, and Nāsik. Toward the end of the period, a quadrilateral plan appears more and more frequently, as, for example, at Kuda and Sailarwādī.

In addition to the *caitya*, or temple proper, numerous monasteries (*vihāras*) are also cut into the rock. These are generally provided with a pillared porch and a screen wall pierced with doorways leading into the interior, which consists of a “courtyard” or congregation hall in the three walls of which are the monks’ cells. The surviving rock-cut examples are all of one story, though the facade of the great monastery at Pītalkhorā simulates a building of several stories.

Monasteries carved into the rock are also known from Orissa (Udayagiri-Khandagiri), in eastern India. These are much humbler than their counterparts in western India, and consist of a row of cells that open out into a porch, the hall being absent. At Uparkot in

Junāgadh, Gujarāt, is a remarkable series of rock-cut structures dating from the 3rd–4th century AD, which appear to be secular in character and in all probability served as royal pleasure houses.

The large number of representations of buildings found on relief sculpture from sites such as Bhārhut, Sānchi, Mathurā, and Amarāvati are a rich source of information about early Indian architecture. They depict walled and moated cities with massive gates, elaborate multi-storied residences, pavilions with a variety of domes, together with the simple, thatched-roofed huts that remained the basis of most Indian architectural forms. A striking feature of this early Indian architecture is the consistent and profuse use of arched windows and doors, which are extremely important elements of the architectural decor.

The Gupta period (4th–6th centuries AD)

Dating toward the close of the 4th and the beginning of the 5th century AD is a series of temples that marks the opening phase of an architecture that is no longer content with merely imitating wooden building but initiates a new movement, ultimately leading to the great and elaborate temples of the 8th century onward.

Two main temple types have been distinguished in the Gupta period. The first consists of a square, dark sanctum with a small, pillared porch in front, both covered with flat roofs. This type of temple answers the simplest needs of worship, a chamber to house the deity and a roof to shelter the devotee. Temple No. 17 at Sānchi is a classic example of this flat-roofed type. The plain walls are of ashlar masonry (made up of squared stone blocks), composed of sizable blocks, which are spanned by large slabs that constitute the ceiling. The pillars of the porch have a campaniform lotus capital, one of the last times this form appears in Indian architecture. Another temple of this type is the Kaṅkāli Devī shrine at Tigowā, which has more elaborate pillars, provided with the overflowing vase, or the vase-and-foilage (*ghaṭa-pallava*), capital that became the basic north Indian order.

It is the second type of temple that points the way to future developments. It also has a square sanctum, or cella, but instead of a flat roof there is a pyramidal superstructure (*śikhara*). Among the most interesting examples are a brick temple at Bhītargaon and the Vishnu temple at Deogarh, built entirely of stone. The pyramidal superstructure of each consists essentially of piled-up cornice moldings of diminishing size, which are decorated primarily with *candraśālā* (ogee arch) ornament derived from the arched windows and doors so frequently found in the centuries immediately before and after Christ. The sanctums of both temples are square in plan, with three sides provided with central offsets (vertical buttress-like projections) that extend from the base of the walls right up to the top of the *śikhara* (spire); the section of the central offset that extends across the wall is conceived in the form of a niche, in which is placed an image. The Deogarh temple is also noteworthy for the large terrace with four corner shrines (now ruined) on which it is placed, prefiguring the quincunx, or *pañcāyatana*, grouping (one structure in each corner and one

in the middle) popular in the later period. The doorway surround, too, is very elaborate, carved with several bands carrying floral and figural motifs. At the base of the surround are rows of worshippers, and in the crossette (projection at the corner) on top are images of graceful river goddesses.

The Pārvatī Devī temple at Nācnā Kuṭṭhārā, also of this period, is interesting for the covered circumambulatory provided around the sanctum and the large hall in front. When first discovered, the temple had an entire chamber above the sanctum (which subsequently collapsed). Though provided with a door, there seems to have been no access to it; thus, for all practical purposes it constituted a false story and, aside from a symbolic meaning, served no other purpose than to emphasize the importance of the sanctum. The principle of gaining height not by the superimposition of ornamental cornice moldings with *candraśālā* decoration but by the multiplication of stories, each imitating the story below, also distinguished the later architectural style of southern India.



Bodh Gaya, Bihar, India:
Mahabodhi temple

Mahabodhi temple, Bodh Gaya, Bihar
state, India.



Buddha sculpture at Mahabodhi
temple

Buddha sculpture at Mahabodhi
temple, Bodh Gaya, Bihar state, India.

The great Mahabodhi temple at Bodh Gaya, commemorating the spot where the Buddha attained enlightenment, though burdened with later restorations, is essentially a temple of this period. It has a particularly majestic *śikhara*, decorated with ornamental niches and *candraśālās*, rising over a square sanctum to a great height.

Along with temples, *stūpas* continued to be built. These also aspired to height, which was achieved by multiplication and heightening of the supporting terraces and elongating the drum and dome. A good example of this new form is the Dhamekh *stūpa* at Sārnāth. Along more conventional lines, but quite elaborate, are the brick *stūpas* in Sind, notably a fine example at Mīrpur Khās.

The rock-cut temple and monastery tradition also continued in this period, notably in western India, where the excavations—especially at Ajantā—acquire extreme richness and magnificence. The monasteries are characterized by the introduction of images into

some of the cells, so that they partake of the nature of temples instead of being simple residences. Temples with an apsidal plan and barrel-vault roofs, however, soon went out of fashion, and are found very rarely in the subsequent period. The early 5th-century cave temples at Udayagiri, Madhya Pradesh, are similar to the simple flat-roofed temples with a hall and are not descended from ancient traditions as preserved in western India.

Medieval temple architecture

Architectural styles initiated during the 5th and 6th centuries found their fullest expression in the medieval period (particularly from the 9th to the 11th centuries), when great stone temples were built. Two main types can be broadly distinguished, one found generally in northern India, the other in southern India. To these can be added a third type, sharing features of both and found in Karnataka and the Deccan. These three types have been identified by some scholars with the *nāgara*, *drāviḍa*, and *vesara* classes referred to in some Sanskrit texts, though the actual meaning of these terms is far from clear. In spite of the havoc wrought by the destructive Islāmic invasions, particularly in the Indo-Gangetic Plains, an extremely large number of monuments have survived in almost every other part of India, particularly in the south, and these continue to be discovered and recorded to the present day.

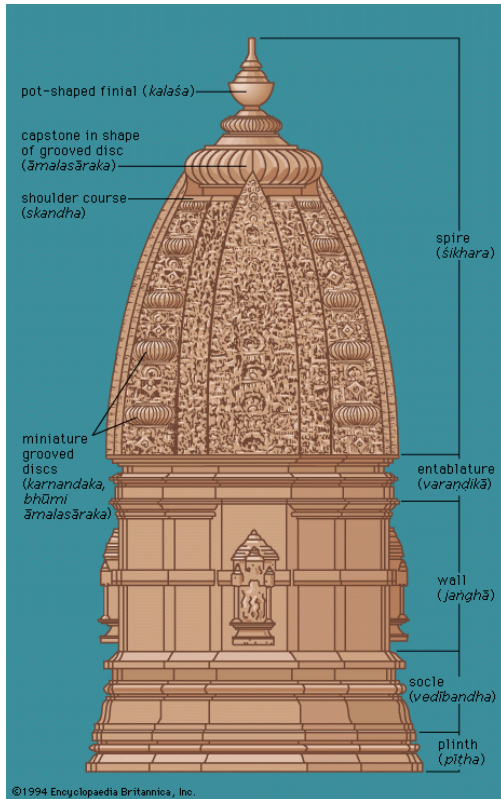
Medieval temple architecture: North Indian style

North Indian temples generally consist of a sanctum enshrining the main image, usually square in plan and shaped like a hollow cube, and one or more halls (called *maṇḍapas*), aligned along a horizontal axis. The sanctum may or may not have an ambulatory, but it is invariably dark, the only opening being the entrance door. The doorway surrounds are richly decorated with bands of figural, floral, and geometrical ornament and with river-goddess groups at the base. A vestibule (*antarāla*) connects the sanctum to the halls, which are of two broad types: the *gūḍhamāṇḍapas*, which are enclosed by walls, light and air let in through windows or doors; and open halls, which are provided with balustrades rather than walls and are consequently lighter and airier. The sanctum almost invariably, and the *maṇḍapas* generally, have *śikharas*; those on the sanctum, appropriately, are the most dominant in any grouping. Internally, the sanctum has a flat ceiling; the *śikhara* is solid theoretically, though hollow chambers to which there is no access must be left within its body to lessen the weight. The ceilings of the halls, supported by carved pillars, are coffered (decorated with sunken panels) and of extremely rich design.

The sanctum is often set on a raised base, or a plinth (*pīṭha*), above which is a foundation block, or socle (*vedibandha*), decorated with a distinct series of moldings; above the *vedibandha* rise the walls proper (*jaṅghā*), which are capped by a cornice or a series of cornice moldings (*varaṇḍikā*), above which rises the *śikhara*. One, three, and sometimes more projections extend all the way from the base of the temple up the walls to the top of the *śikhara*. The central offset (*bhadra*) is the largest and generally carries an image in a niche; the other projections (*rathas*), too, are often decorated with statuary.

The entire temple complex, including sanctum, halls, and attendant shrines, may be raised on a terrace (*jagatī*), which is sometimes of considerable height and size. The attendant shrines—generally four—are placed at the corners of the terrace, forming a *pañcāyatana*, or

quincunx, arrangement that is fairly widespread. The temple complex may be surrounded by a wall with an arched doorway (*toraṇa*).



elevation of a North Indian temple with the *latina* type of superstructure

The *śikhara* is the most distinctive part of the North Indian temple and provides the basis for the most useful and instructive classification. The two basic types are called *latina* and *phāmsanā*. Curvilinear in outline, the *latina* is composed of a series of superimposed horizontal roof slabs and has offsets called *latās*. The edges of the *śikhara* are interrupted at intervals with grooved discs, each one demarcating a “story.” The surface of the entire *śikhara* is covered with a creeper-like tracery, or interlaced work, composed of diminutive ornamental *candraśālās*.

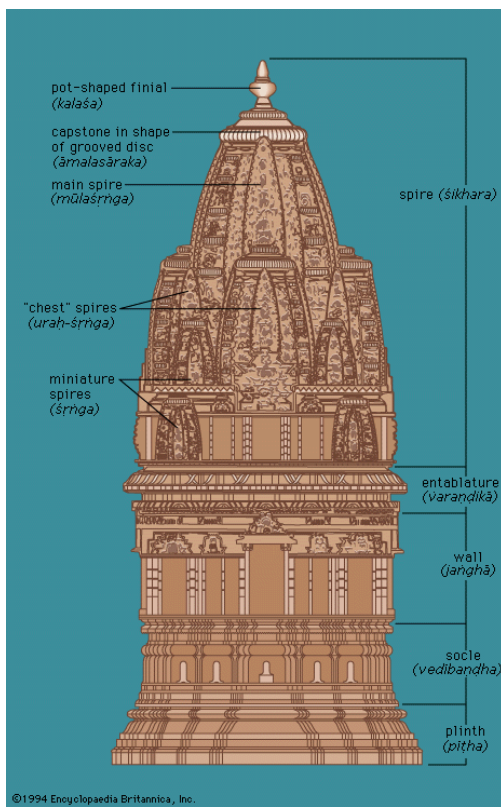
The *śikhara* is truncated at the top and capped by a shoulder course (*skandha*), above which is a circular necking (*grīvā*), carrying a large grooved disc called the *āmalasāraka*. On it rests a pot and a crowning finial (*kalaśa*).

Unlike the *latina*, the *phāmsanā śikhara* is rectilinear rather than curvilinear in outline, and it is lower in height. It is composed of horizontal slabs, like the *latina*, but is capped by a bell-shaped member called the *ghaṇṭā*. The surface of this type of *śikhara* may have projections, like the *latina śikhara*, and be adorned with a variety of architectural ornament.

From the 10th century onward, the *śekhārī* type of spire, an elaboration of the *latina* type, became increasingly popular. In its developed form it consisted of a central *latina* spire (*mūlaśṛṅga*) with one or more rows of half spires added on the sides (*uraḥ-śṛṅga*) and the base strung with miniature spires (*śṛṅgas*). The corners, too, are sometimes filled with quarter spires, the whole mass of carved masonry recalling a mountain with a cluster of subsidiary peaks.

The *latina* and *śekhārī* spires are generally found on the sanctum, while the *phāmsanā* and its variants are usually confined to the *maṇḍapas*, or halls. The sanctum spires also have a large and prominent projection in front (*śukanāsā*), generally rising above the vestibule (*antarāla*). These projections are essentially large ogee arches of complex form, which often contain the image of the presiding deity.

A particularly rich and pleasing variety of North Indian *śikhara*, popular in Mālwa, western India, and northern Deccan, is the *bhūmija* type. It has a central projection on each of the



elevation of a North Indian temple with the śikhārī type of superstructure

four faces, the quadrants so formed filled with miniature spires in vertical and horizontal rows right up to the top.

Although basically reflecting a homogeneous architectural style, temple architecture in northern India developed a number of distinct regional schools. A detailed elucidation of all has yet to be made, but among the most important are the styles of Orissa, central India, Rājasthān, and Gujarāt. The style of Kashmir is distinct from the rest of northern India in several respects, and hardly any examples of the great schools that flourished in modern Uttar Pradesh, Bihār, and Bengal are left standing. The North Indian style also extended for some time into the Karnataka (formerly Karṇāṭa) territory, situated in the southern Deccan, though the architecture of Tamil Nadu was relatively unaffected by it.

Medieval temple architecture: North Indian style of Orissa

The greatest centre of this school is the ancient city of Bhuvaneśvara, in which are concentrated almost 100 examples of the style, both great and small, ranging in date from the 7th to the 13th century. Among the earliest is the Paraśurāmeśvara temple (7th–8th century), with a heavy, stately *latina śikhara*, to which is attached a rectangular *gūḍhamanḍapa* with double sloping roofs. The walls are richly carved, but the interiors, as in almost all examples of the style, are left plain. The Mukteśvara temple (10th century), which has a hall with a *phāmsanā* roof, is the product of the most exquisite workmanship. The enclosing wall and the arched entrance, or *torāṇa*, are still present, giving a clear idea of a temple with all its parts fully preserved. The Brahmeśvara temple, which is dated on the basis of an inscription to the mid-10th century, is a *pañcāyatana*, with subsidiary shrines at all of the corners. The most magnificent building, however, is the great Liṅgarāja temple (11th century), an achievement of Orissan architecture in full flower. The *latina* spire soars to a considerable height (over 125 feet [40 metres]); the wall is divided into two horizontal rows, or registers, replete with statuary; and the attached hall is exquisitely and minutely carved. The most famous of all Orissan temples, however, is the colossal building at Konārak, dedicated to Sūrya, the sun god. The temple and its accompanying hall are conceived in the form of a great chariot drawn by horses. The *śikhara* over the sanctum has entirely collapsed; and all that survives are the ruins of the sanctum and the *gūḍhamanḍapa*, or enclosed hall, and also a separate dancing hall. Of these, the *gūḍhamanḍapa* is now the

most conspicuous, its gigantic *phāmsanā śikhara* rising in three stages and adorned with colossal figures of musicians and dancers.

Because the Orissan style usually favours a *latina śikhara* over the sanctum, the *śekhārī* spire of the Rāīlānī temple (11th century) at Bhuvaneśvara (Bhubaneswar) is quite exceptional. Of particular interest as a late survival of early building traditions is the Vaitāl Deul (8th century), the sanctum of which is rectangular in plan, its *śikhara* imitating a pointed barrel vault. Besides Bhuvaneśvara, important groups of temples are to be found at Khiching and Mukhalingam.

Medieval temple architecture: North Indian style of central India

The area roughly covered by the modern state of Madhya Pradesh was the centre of several vigorous schools of architecture, of which at least four have been identified. The first flourished at Gwalior and adjacent areas (ancient Gopādrī); the second in modern Bundelkhand, known in ancient times as Jeṛākabhukti; the third in the eastern and southeastern parts in the ancient country of Ḍāhala, of which Tripurī, near modern Jabalpur, was the capital; and the fourth in the west, in an area bordering Gujarāt and Rājasthān in the fertile land of Mālava (Mālwa).

The earliest examples in the Gwalior area are a group of small shrines at Naresar, a few miles from Gwalior proper; dating to the 8th century, the shrines have *latina* spires and sparsely ornamented walls. In the 9th century a series of magnificent temples was built, including the Mālā-de at Ḍyāraspur, the Śiva temples at Mahkā and Indore, and a temple dedicated to an unidentified mother goddess at Barwa-Sāgar. The period appears to have been one of experimentation, a variety of plans and spires having been tried. The Mālā-de temple is an early example of the *śekhārī* type in its formative stages; the Indore temple has a star-shaped plan; and the Barwa-Sāgar example has a twin *latina* spire over a rectangular sanctum. The masonry work is of the finest quality and the architectural ornament is crisply carved. (The figural sculptures are few.) The temple at Umrī, with a *latina* spire, is small and exquisitely finished; but the largest and perhaps the finest temple is the Telī-kā-Mandir on Gwalior Fort, rectangular in plan and capped by a pointed barrel vault, recalling once again the survival of ancient roof forms. The walls are decorated with niches (empty at present) topped by tall pediments (triangular gable ornament).

The style of this region became increasingly elaborate from the 10th century, during the supremacy of the Kacchapaghāṭa dynasty. The many examples from this period are distinguished by a low plinth and rich sculptural decoration on the walls. Outstanding among them are the Kākan-maḍh at Suhāniā (1015–35) and the Sās-Bahū temple (completed 1093) in Gwalior Fort. The several temples at Surwāyā and Kadwāhā, though smaller in size, are distinguished for their extremely rich and elegant workmanship.

The style is best represented by a large group of temples at Khajurāho, the capital of the Candella dynasty, though examples are also to be found in Mahoba and at several other sites in the Jhānsi district of Uttar Pradesh, notably Chāndpur and Dudhai. All of the distinctive characteristics of the fully developed style can be seen in the Lakṣmaṇa temple at Khajurāho (dated 941), which is a *pañcāyatana* placed on a tall terrace enclosed by walls. The sanctum has an ambulatory and, facing it, a series of halls, including the *gūḍhamaṇḍapa*, a porch, and a small intermediate hall. Both the ambulatory and the *gūḍhamaṇḍapa* are provided with lateral, balconied arms, or transepts, which let in light and air. Each hall has its own pyramidal *śikhara*, all skillfully correlated to ascend gradually to the main *śekhārī* spire over the sanctum. Extraordinary richness of carving, both in the interior and on the exterior, where the walls carry as many as three rows of sculpture, and a skillful handling of the main spire to suggest ascent are distinguishing features of the style. The largest temple of the group, very similar to the Lakṣmaṇa, is the Kandāriyā Mahāḥeo; and among the most distinguished are the Viśvanātha and the Pārśvanātha temples. The Dūlādeo temple, which does not have an ambulatory, represents the closing phase of the group and probably belongs to the 12th century.

The earliest temples of the Ḍāhala area, dating from the 8th–9th century, are the simple shrines at Bāndhogarh, which consist of a sanctum with *latina* spire and porch. To the 10th century, when the local Kalacuri dynasty was rapidly gaining power, belong the remarkable Śiva temples at Chandrehe and Masaun, the former being circular in plan, with a *latina* spire covered with rich *candraśālā* tracery. The Golā Math at Maihar has the more conventional square sanctum, with a very elegant *latina śikhara*, the walls of which are adorned with two rows of figural sculpture. There must have existed at Gurgī a large number of temples, though all of them now are in total ruin. Judging from a colossal image of Śiva-Pārvatī and a huge entrance, which have somehow survived, the main temple must have been of very great size. Another important site is Amarkantak, where there are a large group of temples, the most important of which is the Karṇa. Although generally of the 11th century, they are quite simple, lacking the rich sculptural decoration so characteristic of the period. By contrast, the Virāṭeśvara temple at Sohāgpur, with an unusually tall and narrow *śekhārī* spire, is covered with sculptural ornamentation as rich as that of Khajurāho.

The Mālava region, ruled largely by the Paramāra dynasty, appears to have been the first to develop the *bhūmija* type of *śikhara* (10th century). The finest and most representative group of these structures is at Un. Though, unfortunately, they are considerably damaged, judging from the remains, they must have been very elegant structures. The best preserved and easily the finest *bhūmija* temple is the Udayeśvara (1059–82), situated at Udaipur in Madhya Pradesh. The *śikhara*, based on a stellate plan, is divided into quadrants by four *latās*, or offsets, each one of which has five rows of aediculae. The large hall has three entrance porches, one to the front and two to the sides, and walls that are richly carved. The whole complex, including seven subsidiary shrines, is placed on a broad, tall platform. The Siddheśvara temple at Nemāwar (early 12th century) is even larger than the Udayeśvara,

though the proportions are not as well balanced and the quality of the carving is inferior. Structures in the *bhūmija* manner continued to be made in Mālava up to the 15th century; the Malvai temple at Alīrājpur is a good example of the late phase.

From Mālava, the *bhūmija* style spread to the neighbouring regions. To the north in Rājasthān, the Mahānāleśvara temple at Menāl (c. 11th century), the Sun temple at Jhālrāpātan (11th century), the Śiva temple at Rāmgarh (12th century), and the Ēṇḍeśvara temple (12th century) at Bijoliān are important examples. To the west, in Gujarāt, are temples at Limkheda and Sarnāl of the 11th and 12th centuries. The style was particularly favoured in Mahārāshtra, to the south. Among surviving examples, the most impressive is the Ambarnāth temple near Bombay (11th century); Balsāne and Sinnar also have pleasing temples. The style continued up to the 16th century, many examples having been found in north Deccan and Berār. The *bhūmija* style also spread to the east of Mālava; the Bhāṇḍ Dewal at Arang (11th century), for example, is a Dāhala adaptation.

Medieval temple architecture: North Indian style of Rājasthān

A group of temples at Osiān, dating to about the 8th century, represents adequately the opening phases of medieval temple architecture in Rājasthān. They stand on high terraces and consist of a sanctum, a hall, and a porch. The sanctum is generally square and has a *latina* spire. The walls, with one central and two subsidiary projections, are decorated with sculpture, often placed in niches with tall pediments. The halls are generally of the open variety, provided with balustrades rather than walls, so that the interiors are well lit. The surrounds of the doorway sanctum are quite elaborate, with four or five bands of decoration and the usual river-goddess groups at the base. The pillars, with *ghaṭa-pallava* (vase-and-foilage) capitals, are also decorated, richness of sculpture and architectural elaboration being a characteristic of this group of monuments. The Mahāvīra temple, which is the largest, belongs to the 8th century, though renovated in later times, when the *torāṇa* (gateway) and the *śikhara* were added. Other important temples are Harihara Nos. 1, 2, and 3 and two temples dedicated to Vishnu. The ruined Harshat Mātā temple at Ābānerī, of a slightly later date (c. 800), was erected on three stepped terraces of great size and is remarkable for the exquisite quality of the carving. Some of the finest temples of the style date from the 10th century, the most important of which are the Ghaṭeśvara temple at Bāḍolī and the Ambikā-Mātā temple at Jagat. The simple but beautiful Bāḍolī temple consists of a sanctum with a *latina* superstructure and an open hall with six pillars and two pilasters (columns that project a third of their width or less from the wall) supporting a *phāmsanā* spire. Only the central projections of the sanctum walls are decorated with niches containing sculpture. A large open hall was built in front of the temple at a later date. The Ambikā-Mātā temple at Jagat, of the mid-10th century, is exceptionally fine. It consists of a sanctum, a *gūḍhamāṇḍapa*, or enclosed hall, and a parapeted porch with projecting eaves. The walls of

the sanctum and the hall are covered with fine sculpture, the superstructures being of the *śekharī* and the *phāmsanā* types.

Temples, too numerous to mention, dating from the 10th and—to an even greater extent—the 11th century onward, are found throughout Rājasthān. The styles of Rājasthān and neighbouring Gujarāt during these centuries grew closer and closer together until the differences between them were gradually obliterated. This coalescence resulted in the emergence of a composite style found throughout Gujarāt and Rājasthān. Temples situated in the two areas are discussed separately here, but this is for the sake of convenience and does not signify any real stylistic difference.

The temples at Kirāḍu in Rājasthān, dating from the late 10th and 11th centuries, are early examples of the style shared by Rājasthān and Gujarāt. The Someśvara temple (c. 1020) is the most important and clearly shows the movement toward increasing elaboration and ornamentation. Each of the constituent parts became more complex; the moldings of the plinth, for example, are multiplied to include bands of elephants, horses, and soldiers. The walls are covered with sculpture, and the spire is of the rich *śekharī* type. Situated in Rājasthān, but again in the composite style, are the extraordinarily sumptuous temples known as the Vimala Vasahī (1031) and the Lūṇa Vasahī (1230) at Mt. Ābū. The Vimala Vasahī consists of a sanctum, a *gūḍhamaṇḍapa*, and a magnificent assembly hall added in mid-12th century. The plain, uncarved exterior walls of the rectangular enclosure of the temple have on the inside rows of cells containing images of divinities. The interiors are very richly carved, the coffered ceilings loaded with a wealth of detail. The Lūṇa Vasahī is even more elaborate, though the quality of the work had begun to decline perceptibly.

Traditional architecture continued even after the Islāmic invasions, particularly during the reign of Rāṇā Kumbhā of ęḥkār (c. 1430–69). During this period, the tall nine-storied Kīrtistambha and other temples at Chitor and also the great Chaumukha temple at Ranakpur (1438) were built.

Medieval temple architecture: North Indian style of Gujarāt

Gujarāt was the home of one of the richest regional styles of northern India. A temple at Gop (c. 600), with a tall terrace and a cylindrical sanctum with high walls capped by a *phāmsanā* roof, and other temples in Saurāshṭra show the formative phases of the style. Its distinctive features are clear in an interesting group of temples from Roḍā (c. 8th century). The sanctum is square in plan and has *latina* spires that are weighty and majestic. The walls are relatively plain, with niches, housing images, provided only on the central projection. The masonry work is exceptionally good, a characteristic of Gujarāt architecture throughout its history. The Rāṇakdevī temple at Wadhvān, of the early 10th century, is also characterized by plain walls and a *latina* spire, while the Śiva temple at Kerākoṭ has a *śekharī* spire and also a *gūḍhamaṇḍapa*. The great Sun Temple at Modhera, datable to the early years of the 11th

century, represents a fully developed Gujarāt style of great magnificence. The temple consists of a sanctum (now in ruins), a *gūḍhamaṇḍapa*, an open hall of extraordinary richness, and an arched entrance in front of which was the great tank. The Navalakhā temple at Sejakpur continued this tradition. The Rudramāla at Siddhapur, the most magnificent temple of the 12th century, is now in a much ruined condition, with only the *torāṇa* (gateway) and some subsidiary structures remaining. Successively damaged and rebuilt, the Somanātha at Prabhāsa Patan was the most famous temple of Gujarāt, its best known structure dating from the time of Kumārapāla (mid-12th century). It has been now dismantled, but a great temple built at the site in recent years testifies to the survival of ancient traditions in modern Gujarāt.

The hills of Satrunjaya and Girnār house veritable temple cities. Most of the shrines, which are of late date, are picturesque but otherwise of little significance. With the Islāmic conquest, the Gujarāt architect adapted his considerable skills to meet the needs of a patron of different religion and quickly produced a totally successful Indian version of Islāmic architecture.

Medieval temple architecture: North Indian style of Karnataka

The North Indian style was largely confined to India above the Vindhyas, though for a short period it also flourished in a region of southern India known as Karnataka from ancient times and now largely part of Karnataka (formerly Mysore) state. Here, temples of the northern and the southern styles are found next to each other, notably at Aihole and Pattadkal. The earliest appears to be the Lāḍh Khān at Aihole, closely related to the 5th-century temple at Nāchnā Kutharā in northern India. The northern style was also cultivated at Pattadkal, where the most important examples are the Kāśīśivanātha, the Galaganātha, and the Pāpanātha. Ālampur, now in Andhra Pradesh, has eight temples of the northern style with *latina* spires. These belong to the late 7th and early 8th centuries and are the finest and among the last examples of the northern style in southern India.

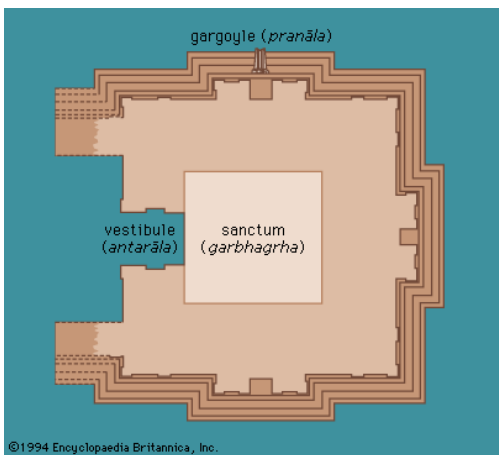
Medieval temple architecture: North Indian style of Kashmir

The architectural style of the Kashmir region is quite distinct: unlike other regions, in which the sanctum usually has a *latina* or *śekhārī* spire, the roof of the Kashmir sanctum is of the *phāmsanā* type, with eaves raised in two stages. The greatest example to survive is the ruined Sun Temple at Mārtanḍ (mid-8th century), which, though its *śikhara* is missing, gives a good idea of the characteristic features of the style. The temple is placed in a rectangular court enclosed by a series of columns. Access to the court is through an imposing entrance hall, the walls of which have doorways with gabled pediments and a trefoil (shaped like a trifoliate leaf) recess. The Avantisvāmī temple of the mid-9th century, now quite ruined, must have been similar, though much more richly ornamented. The style continued up to

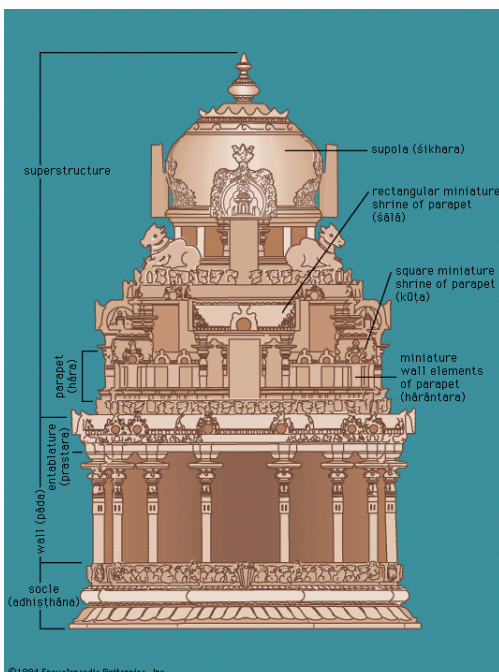
the 12th century; the Rilhaneśvara temple at Pāndrenṭhan is a comparatively well-preserved example of this period.

Medieval temple architecture: South Indian style

The home of the South Indian style, sometimes called the *drāviḍa* style, appears to be the modern state of Tamil Nadu; examples, however, are found all over southern India, particularly in the adjoining regions of Karnataka and Andhradeśa, now largely covered by the states of Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh. Both Andhradeśa and Karnataka developed variants, particularly Karnataka, which evolved a distinct manner, basically South Indian but with features of North Indian origin. The Karnatic style extended northward into Mahārāshtra, where the Kailasa temple at Ellora is the most famous example.



plan of the sanctum of a South Indian temple



elevation of a South Indian temple with the *kūṭina* type of superstructure

A typical South Indian temple consists of a hall and a square sanctum that has a superstructure of the *kūṭina* type. Pyramidal in form, the *kūṭina* spire consists of stepped stories, each of which simulates the main story and is conceived as having its own “wall” enclosed by a parapet. The parapet itself is composed of miniature shrines strung together: square ones (called *kūṭas*) at the corners and rectangular ones with barrel-vault roofs (called *śālās*) in the centre, the space between them connected by miniature wall elements called *hārāntaras*. (Conspicuous in the early temples, these stepped stories of the superstructure with their parapets became more and more ornamental, so that in the course of time they evolved into more or less decorative bands around the pyramidal superstructure.) On top of the stepped structure is a necking that supports a solid dome, or cupola (instead of the North Indian grooved disc), which in turn is crowned by a pot and finial. The walls of the sanctum rise above a series of moldings, constituting the foundation block, or socle (*adhiṣṭhāna*), that differ from North Indian temples; and the surface of the walls does not have the prominent offsets seen in North Indian temples but is instead divided by pilasters. In the Karnatic version, particularly from the late 10th century onward (sometimes called the *vesara* style), this arrangement of the superstructure is loaded with decoration, thus considerably obscuring the component elements. At the same time, these elements

—particularly the central offset with its subsidiaries that carry *candraśālā* motifs—are so manipulated that they tend to form distinct vertical bands, in this respect closely recalling the *śikhara*s of northern India.

The design of the hall-temple roofed by a barrel vault, popular in the centuries before and after Christ, was adopted in southern India for the great entrance buildings, or *gopuras*, that give access to the sacred enclosures in which the temples stand. Relatively small and inconspicuous in the early examples, they had, by the mid-12th century, outstripped the main temple in size.

Medieval temple architecture: South Indian style of Tamil Nadu (7th–18th century)

The early phase, which, broadly speaking, coincided with the political supremacy of the Pallava dynasty (c. 650–893), is best represented by the important monuments at Mahābalipuram. Besides a fine group of small cave temples (early 7th century), among the earliest examples of their type in southern India, there are here several monolithic temples carved out of the rock, the largest of which is the massive three-storied Dharmarāja-ratha (c. 650). The finest temple at this site and of this period is an elegant complex of three shrines called the Shore Temple (c. 700), not cut out of rock but built of stone. The Tālapurīśvara temple at Panamalai is another excellent example. The capital city of Kānchipuram also possesses some fine temples—for example, the Kailāsanātha (dating a little later than the Shore Temple), with its stately superstructure and subsidiary shrines attached to the walls. The enclosure wall has a series of small shrines on all sides and a small *gopura*. Another splendid temple at Kānchipuram is the Vaikuṇṭha Perumāḷ (mid-8th century), which has an interesting arrangement of three sanctums, one above the other, encased within the body of the superstructure.

The 9th century marked a fresh movement in the South Indian style, revealed in several small, simple, but most elegant temples set up during the ascendancy of the Cōḷa and other contemporary dynasties. Most important of a large number of unpretentious and beautiful shrines that dot the Tamil countryside are the Vijayālaya Cōḷīśvara temple at Nārttāmalai (mid-9th century), with its circular sanctum, spherical cupola, and massive, plain walls; the twin shrines called Agastyīśvara and Cōḷīśvara, at Kīlaiyūr (late 9th century); and the splendid group of two temples (originally three) known as the Mūvarkovil, at Koḍumbālūr (c. 875).

These simple beginnings led rapidly (in about a century) to the mightiest of all temples in the South Indian style, the Bṛhadiśvara, or Rājarājeśvara, temple, built at the Cōḷa capital of Thanjāvūr. A royal dedication of Rājarāja I, the temple was begun around 1003 and completed about seven years later. The main walls are raised in two stories, above which the superstructure rises to a height of 190 feet (60 metres). It has 16 stories, each of which consists of a wall with a parapet of shrines carved in relatively low relief. The great temple

at Gaṅgaikondaṇḍaḥapuram, built (1030–40) by the Cōla king Rājendra I, is somewhat smaller than the Br̥hadiśvara; but the constituent elements of its superstructure, whose outline is concave, are carved in bolder relief, giving the whole a rather emphatic plasticity. The Airāvateśvara (1146–73) and Kampahareśvara (1178–1223) temples at Dārāsuram and Tribhuvanam follow the tradition of the 11th century but are smaller and considerably more ornate. They bring to a close a great phase of South Indian architecture extending from the 11th to the 13th century.

From the middle of the 12th century onward, the *gopuras*, or entrance buildings, to temple enclosures began to be greatly emphasized. They are extremely large and elaborately decorated with sculpture, quite dominating the architectural ensemble. Their construction is similar to that of the main temple except that they are rectangular in plan and capped by a barrel vault rather than a cupola, and only the base is of stone, the superstructure being made of brick and plaster. Among the finest examples are the Sundara Pāndya *gopura* (13th century) of the Jambukeśvara temple at Tiruchchirāppalli and the *gopuras* of a great Śiva temple at Chidambaram, built largely in the 12th–13th century (see). Even larger *gopuras*, if not of such fine quality, continued to be built up to the 17th century. Such great emphasis was placed on the construction of *gopuras* that enclosure walls, which were not really necessary, were especially built to justify their erection. In the course of time several walls and *gopuras* were successively built, each enclosing the other so that at the present day one often has to pass through a succession of walls with their *gopuras* before reaching the main shrine. A particularly interesting example is the Ranganātha temple at Srīrangam, which has seven enclosure walls and numerous *gopuras*, halls, and temples constructed in the course of several centuries. The *gopuras* of the Mīnākṣī temple at Madurai are also good representative examples of this period.

In addition to the *gopuras*, temples also continued to be built. Although they never achieved colossal size, they are often of very fine workmanship. The Subrahmaṇya temple of the 17th century, built in the compound of the Br̥hadiśvara temple at Thanjāvūr, indicates the vitality of architectural traditions even at this late date.

Medieval temple architecture: South Indian style of Karnataka

The early phase, as in Tamil Nadu, opens with the rock-cut cave temples. Of the elaborate and richly sculptured group at Bādāmi, one cave temple is dated 578, and two cave temples at Aihole are early 8th century. Among structural temples built during the rule of the Cālukyas of Bāḥami are examples in the North Indian style; but, because the Karnataka region was more receptive to southern influences, there are a large number of examples that are basically South Indian with only a few North Indian elements. The Durgā temple (c. 7th century) at Aihole is apsidal in plan, echoing early architectural traditions; the northern *latina śikhara* is in all probability a later addition. The Mālegitti Śivālaya temple at Bāḥami (early 8th century), consisting of a sanctum, a hall with a parapet of *śālās* and *kūṭas*

(rectangular and square miniature shrines), and an open porch, is similar to examples in Tamil Nadu. The Virūpākṣa at Pattadakal (c. 733–746) is the most imposing and elaborate temple in the South Indian manner. It is placed within an enclosure, to which access is through a *gopura*; and the superstructure, consisting of four stories, has a projection in the front, a feature inspired by the prominent projections, or *śukanāsā*, of North Indian temples. Belonging to the 9th century is the triple shrine (the three sanctums sharing the same *maṇḍapa*, or hall) at Kambaḍahalli and the extremely refined and elaborately carved Bhoganandīśvara temple at Nandi. The Chāvuṇḍarāyabasti (c. 982–995) at Śravaṇa-Belgoḷa is also an impressive building, with an elegant superstructure of three stories.

With the 10th century, the Karnatic idiom begins to show an increasing individuality that culminates in the distinctive style of the 12th century and later. The Kalleśvara temple at Kukkanūr (late 10th century) and a large Jaina temple at Lakkundi (c. 1050–1100) clearly demonstrate the transition. The superstructures, though basically of the South Indian type, have offsets and recesses that tend to emphasize a vertical, upward movement. The Lakkundi temple is also the first to be built of chloritic schist, which is the favoured material of the later period and which lends itself easily to elaborate sculptural ornamentation. With the Mahādevā temple at Ittagi (c. 1112) the transition is complete, the extremely rich and profuse decoration characteristic of this shrine being found in all work that follows. Dating from the reign of the Hoysaḷa dynasty (c. 1141) is a twin Hoysaḷeśvara temple at Halebīd, the capital city. The sanctums are stellate in form but lack their original superstructures. The pillars of the interior are lathe-turned in a variety of fanciful shapes. The exterior is almost totally covered with sculpture, the walls carrying the usual complement of images; the base, or socle, is decorated with several bands of ornamental motifs and a narrative relief. Among other temples that were constructed in this style, the most important are the Chenna Keśava temple at Belūr (1117), the Amṛteśvara temple at Amritpur (1196), and the Keśava temple at Somnāthpur (1268).

Medieval temple architecture: South Indian style of Mahārāshtra, Andhradeśa, and Kerala



Kailasa temple

Kailasa temple (cave 16), Ellora Caves, northwest-central Maharashtra state, India.

The traditions of cave architecture are stronger in Mahārāshtra than in any other part of India; there, great shrines were cut out of rock right up to the 9th century AD and even later. Of those belonging to the early phase, the most remarkable is a temple at Elephanta (early 6th century); equally impressive are numerous temples at Ellora (6th–9th centuries). The Karnatic version of the South Indian style extended northward into Mahārāshtra, where the Kailasa temple at Ellora, erected in the reign of the Rāṣṭrakūṭa Krishna I (8th century), is its most stupendous

achievement. The entire temple is carved out of rock and is over 100 feet (30 metres) high. It is placed in a courtyard, the three sides of which are carved with cells filled with images; the front wall has an entrance *gopura*. The tall base, or plinth, is decorated with groups of large elephants and griffins, and the superstructure rises in four stories. Groups of important temples in the southern style are also found in the Andhra country, notably at Biccavolu, ranging in date from the 9th to the 11th centuries. The 13th-century temples at Palampet are the counterparts of the elaborate Karnatic style of the same period, but without its overpowering elaboration. The temples of Kerala represent an adaptation of the South Indian style to the great main fall of this region and are provided with heavy sloping roofs of stone that imitate timber originals required for draining away the water.

Islāmic architecture in India: period of the Delhi and provincial sultanates

Although the province of Sind was captured by the Arabs as early as 712, the earliest examples of Islāmic architecture to survive in the subcontinent date from the closing years of the 12th century; they are located at Delhi, the main seat of Muslim power throughout the centuries. The Qūwat-ul-Islām mosque (completed 1196), consisting of cloisters around a courtyard with the sanctuary to the west, was built from the remains of demolished temples. In 1198 an arched facade (*maqṣūrah*) was built in front to give the building an Islāmic aspect, but its rich floral decoration and corbelled (supported by brackets projecting from the wall) arches are Indian in character. The Quṭb Mīnār, a tall (238 feet high), fluted tower provided with balconies, stood outside this mosque. The Aṛhāi-dīn-kā-jhomprā mosque (c. 1119), built at Ajmer, was similar to the Delhi mosque, the *maqṣūrah* consisting of engrailed (sides ornamented with several arcs) corbel arches decorated with greater restraint than the Quṭb example. The earliest Islāmic tomb to survive is the Sultān Ghārī, built in 1231, but the finest is the tomb of Iltutmish, who ruled from 1211 to 1236. The interior, covered with Arabic inscriptions, in its richness displays a strong Indian quality. The first use of the true arch in India is found in the ruined tomb of Balban (died 1287). From 1296 to 1316 ‘Alā’-ud-Dīn Khaljī attempted to expand the Qūwat-ul-Islām mosque, which already had been enlarged in 1230, to three times its size; but he was unable to complete the work. All that has survived of it is the Alai Darḳāzah, a beautiful entrance.

In contrast to this early phase, the style of the 14th century at Delhi, ushered in by the Tughluq dynasty, is impoverished and austere. The buildings, with a few exceptions, are made of coarse rubble masonry and overlaid with plaster. The tomb of Ghiyās-ud-Dīn Tughluq (c. 1320–25), placed in a little fortress, has sloping walls faced with panels of stone and marble. Also to be ascribed to his reign is the magnificent tomb of Shāh Rukn-e ‘Ālam at Multān in Pakistan, which is built of brick and faced with exquisite tile work. The Koṭla Fīrūz Shāh (1354–70), with its mosques, palaces, and tombs, is now in ruins but represents the major building activity of Fīrūz Shāh, who took a great interest in architecture. Many mosques and tombs of this period and of the 15th century are found in Delhi and its

environs; the most notable of them are the Begampur and Khirḳī mosques and an octagonal tomb of Khān-e Jahān Tilangānī. In the early 16th century, Shēr Shāh Sūr refined upon this style, the Qal'ah-e Kuhnah Masjid and his tomb at Sasarām (c. 1540) being the finest of a series of distinguished works that were created during his reign.

The provinces, which gradually became independent sultanates, did not lag behind in architectural activity. In West Bengal, at Pandua, is the immense Ādīna Masjid (1364–69), which utilized remains of Indian temples. In Jaunpur, Uttar Pradesh, are a group of elegant mosques, notably the Aṭalā Masjid (1377–1408) and the Jāmi' Masjid (c. 1458–79), characterized by *maqṣūrah*s that have the aspect of imposing gateways. The sultans of Mālwa built elegant structures at Māndu and at Chanderi in the middle of the 15th century. The sultanate of Gujarāt is notable for its great contribution to Islāmic architecture in India. The style, which is basically indigenous, reinterprets foreign influences with great resourcefulness and confidence, producing works notable for their integrity and unity. The city of Ahmadābād (Ahmedabad) is full of elegant buildings; the Jāmi' Masjid (c. 1424), for example, is a masterly exposition of the style. Fine examples dating from the second half of the 15th century are the small but exquisite mosques of Muḥāfiz Khān (1492) and Rānī Sabra'i (1514) at Ahmadābād and the handsome Jāmi' Masjid at the city of Chāmpāner.

The Deccan was another great centre, but in contrast to Gujarāt it took little from the indigenous building traditions. Among the earliest works is the Jāmi' Masjid at Gulbarga (1367), with its extraordinary cloisters consisting of wide arches on low piers, producing a most solemn effect. The city of Bīdar possesses many remains, including a remarkable series of 12 tombs, the most elaborate of which is that of 'Alā-ud-Dīn Aḥmad Bahmanī (died 1457), which has extremely fine decorations in coloured tile. Some of the finest examples of Islāmic architecture in the Deccan, however, are in Bijāpur. The most important buildings of this city are the great Jāmi' Masjid (begun in 1558) with its superb arched cloisters; the ornate Ibrāhīm Rawza; and the Ḍōl Gunbad (built by Muḥammad 'Ādil Shāh), a tomb of exceptional size and grandeur, with one of the largest domes in existence.

The Hindu kingdoms that managed to retain varying degrees of independence during the period of Islāmic supremacy also produced important works. These structures naturally bore the imprint of what survived of traditional Indian architecture to a greater extent than did those monuments patronized by Muslims. Among the Hindu structures of this period are the extensive series of palaces, all in ruin, built by Rāṇā Kumbhā ṣc. 1430–69) at Chitor, and the superb Mān Mandir palace at Gwalior (1486–1516), a rich and magnificent work that exerted considerable influence on the development of Mughal architecture at Fatehpur Sīkrī.

Islāmic architecture in India: Mughal style

The advent of the Mughal dynasty marks a striking revival of Islāmic architecture in northern India: Persian, Indian, and the various provincial styles were successfully fused to



Delhi: Jāmi' Masjid

Jāmi' Masjid, Delhi.

produce works of unusual refinement and quality. The tomb of Humāyūn, begun in 1564, inaugurates the new style. Built entirely of red sandstone and marble, it shows considerable Persian influence. The great fort at Āgra (1565–74) and the city of Fatehpur Sīkri (1569–74) represent the building activities of the emperor Akbar. The former has the massive so-called Delhi gate (1566) and lengthy and immense walls carefully designed and faced with dressed stone throughout.

The most important achievements, however, are to be found at Fatehpur Sīkri; the Jāmi' Masjid (1571), with the colossal gateway known as the Buland Darwāza, for example, is one of the finest mosques of the Mughal period. Other notable buildings include the palace of Jodhā Bāl, which has a strongly indigenous aspect; the exquisitely carved Turkish Sultānā's house; the Pānch-Maḥal; the Dīvān-e 'Āmm; and the so-called hall of private audience. Most of the buildings are of post and lintel construction, arches being used very sparingly. The tomb of the emperor, at Sikandarā, near Āgra, is of unique design, in the shape of a truncated square pyramid 340 feet (103 metres) on each side. It consists of five terraces, four of red sandstone and the uppermost of white marble. Begun about 1602, it was completed in 1613, during the reign of Akbar's son Jahāngīr. Architectural undertakings in this emperor's reign were not very ambitious, but there are fine buildings, chiefly at Lahore. The tomb of his father-in-law Ītimāḥ-ud-Dawla, at Āgra, is small but of exquisite workmanship, built entirely of delicately inlaid marble. The reign of Shāh Jahān (1628–58) is as remarkable for its architectural achievements as was that of Akbar. He built the great Red Fort at Delhi (1639–48), with its dazzling hall of public audience, the flat roof of which rests on rows of columns and pointed, or cusped, arches, and the Jāmi' Masjid (1650–56), which is among the finest mosques in India. But it is the Tāj Mahal (c. 1632–c. 1649), built as a tomb for Queen Mumtāz Maḥal, that is the greatest masterpiece of his reign. All the resources of the empire were put into its construction. In addition to the mausoleum proper, the complex included a wide variety of accessory buildings of great beauty. The marble mausoleum rises up from a tall terrace (at the four corners of which are elegant towers, or minārs) and is crowned by a graceful dome. Other notable buildings of the reign of Shāh Jahān include the Motī Masjid (c. 1648–55) and the Jāmi' Masjid at Āgra (1548–55).

Architectural monuments of the reign of Aurangzeb represent a distinct decline; the tomb of Rābī'ah Begam at Aurangābād, for example (1679), is a poor copy of the Tāj Mahal. The royal mosque at Lahore (1673–74) is of much better quality, retaining the grandeur and dignity of earlier work; and the Motī Masjid at Delhi (1659–60) possesses much of the early refinement and delicacy. The tomb of Šafdar Jang at Delhi (c. 1754) was among the last important works to be produced under the Mughal dynasty and had already lost the coherence and balance characteristic of mature Mughal architecture.

European traditions and the modern period

Buildings imitating contemporary styles of European architecture, often mixed with a strong provincial flavour, were known in India from at least the 16th century. Some of this work was of considerable merit, particularly the baroque architecture of the Portuguese colony of Goa, where splendid buildings were erected in the second half of the 16th century. Among the most famous of these structures to survive is the church of Bom Jesus, which was begun in 1594 and completed in 1605.

The 18th and 19th centuries witnessed the erection of several buildings deeply indebted to Neoclassic styles; these buildings were imitated by Indian patrons, particularly in areas under European rule or influence. Subsequently, attempts were made by the British, with varying degrees of success, to engraft the neo-Gothic and also the neo-Saracenic styles onto Indian architectural tradition. At the same time, buildings in the great Indian metropolises came under increasing European influence; the resulting hybrid styles gradually found their way into cities in the interior. In recent years an attempt has been made to grapple with the problems of climate and function, particularly in connection with urban development. The influence of the Swiss architect Le Corbusier, who worked on the great Chandīgarh project, involving the construction of a new capital for Punjab, in the early 1950s, and that of other American and European masters has brought about a modern architectural movement of great vitality, which is in the process of adapting itself to local requirements and traditions.

Indian sculpture

On the Indian subcontinent, sculpture seems to have been the favoured medium of artistic expression. Even architecture and the little painting that has survived from the early periods partake of the nature of sculpture. Particularly is this true of rock-cut architecture, which is often little more than sculpture on a colossal scale. Structural buildings are also profusely adorned with sculpture that is often inseparable from it. The close relationship between architecture and sculpture has to be taken into account when considering individual works that, even if complete in themselves, are also fragments belonging to a larger context. Indian sculpture, particularly from the 10th century onward, thus cannot be studied in isolation but must be considered as part of a larger entity to the total effect of which it contributes and from which it in turn gains meaning.

The subject matter of Indian sculpture is almost invariably religious. This does not mean that it cannot be understood as a work of art apart from its religious significance; but, at the same time, an understanding of its motivation and intent enriches one's appreciation. Much of what is represented is the recounting of legend and myth, particularly in the two centuries before Christ, when narrative relief was much in vogue. The work at this time, didactic and edificatory in intent, generally expresses itself in forms that are surprisingly earthy and sensuous. The anthropomorphic representation of the Buddha is avoided, and the subsidiary gods and goddesses are very much creatures of this earth. The Buddha image formulated around the 1st century CE is not what one would expect of the meditative,

compassionate, Master of the Law; he is presented rather as an energetic, earthy being radiating strength and power.

The foundations of traditional Hindu imagery were also laid about the same time that the Buddha image was first formulated: images with several arms, and sometimes heads, representing the Indian mind's attempt to define visually the infiniteness of divinity. In subsequent periods the image with many arms became a commonplace in Hindu, Buddhist, and Jaina iconography. Although the various pantheons expanded, they continued to share features of common derivation, expressing the belief that beyond the phenomenal multiplicity of forms lay the unity of the Godhead.

In addition to the major religions, there has always existed in India a substratum of folk beliefs and cults dedicated to the worship of powers that preside over the operation of the life processes of nature. These fertility cults, best expressed in the worship of the male and female divinities *yakshas* and *yakshis*, played an important part in the development of Indian art. Among the perennial motifs that spring from the cults, those expressing life and abundance—such as the lotus, the pot overflowing with vegetation, water, or the like, the tree, the amorous couple, and above all the *yakshas* and *yakshis* themselves—are most significant. The images of these divinities, in particular, are the source of a great deal of artistic imagery and played a leading part in the development of iconographic types such as the images of the Buddha, the goddess Shri, and other divinities. The maternal as the ideal of female beauty, which is manifested artistically in the emphasis on full breasts and wide hips, can be traced to the same beliefs. The very richness and exuberance of much Indian art is an expression of the view of life that equates beauty with abundance.

It is difficult to generalize about the style of a sculptural tradition that extended over a period of almost 5,000 years, but it is nevertheless clear that the distinguishing quality of Indian sculpture is its emphatic plasticity so obvious in Sanchi I and Mathura sculpture from the 1st–3rd century CE. Forms are seen as swelling from within in response to the power of an inner life, the sculptor's function being to make these more manifest. At the same time a vision of form that is carved from without rather than modelled from within is also present, as for example at Bharhut. The history of much of Indian sculpture, marked by periods of high achievement bursting with creativity followed by periods in which the potentialities so postulated are gradually worked out, is essentially the interaction of these two dominant tendencies.

Indus valley civilization (c. 2500–1800 BCE)

Sculpture found in excavated cities consists of small pieces, generally terra-cotta objects, soapstone, or steatite, seals carved for the most part with animals, and a few statuettes of stone and bronze. The terra-cotta figurines are summarily modelled and provided with elaborate jewelry, which was fashioned separately and applied to the surface of the piece. Most of the work is simple, but a small group of human heads with horns are very



steatite seal

Steatite seal, Indus valley civilization,
c. 2300–c. 1750

BCE

; in the National Museum of India, New
Delhi.



steatite seal

Steatite seal, the Indus valley
civilization, c. 2300–c. 1750

BCE

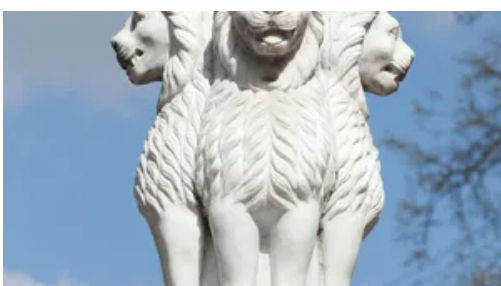
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Delhi.

sensitively modelled. Animal figures are common, particularly bulls, which are often carved with a sure understanding of their bulky, massive form. This plastic quality is also found in the humped bulls engraved on steatite seals, where the modelling is more refined and sensitive. A humpless beast, generally called a “unicorn,” is another favourite animal, but it is frequently quite stylized. In addition to bison, elephants, rhinoceroses, and tigers, seals are carved with images of apparent religious significance, often strongly pictographic.

The terra-cotta sculpture and the seals both show two clear and distinct stylistic trends, one plastic and sensuous, the other linear and abstract. These appear during the same period and are also seen in the small group of stone and bronze sculptures that date from this period (National Museum, New Delhi). Of extraordinarily full and refined modelling is a fragmentary torso from Harappa, barely four inches (10 cm) high but of imposing monumentality; the same feeling for massive form is present in a lesser known bronze buffalo. A jaunty bronze dancing girl with head tilted upward (about 4.5 inches [11 cm] high), from Mohenjo-daro, and a headless figure of a male

dancer from Harappa, shoulders twisted in a circular movement, clearly demonstrate, in the attenuated and wiry tension of their forms, the second component of Indus valley art. Of great interest is a famous bearded figure from Mohenjo-daro wearing a robe decorated with a pattern composed of trefoil motifs. The tight, compressed shape of the body and the expansive modelling of the head demonstrate that the two aspects of form revealed in Indus valley art were not compartmentalized but interacted with each other. This can also be seen in the interplay of modelled form and textured surface frequently found in works produced by this civilization.

Mauryan period (c. 3rd century BCE)



Little is known of Indian art in the period between the Indus valley civilization and the reign of the Mauryan emperor Ashoka. When sculpture again began to be found, it was remarkable for its maturity, seemingly fully formed at birth. The most famous examples are great circular stone pillars, products of Ashoka's

Lion Capital of Ashoka

A replica of the Lion Capital of Ashoka, which topped an ancient memorial pillar in Sarnath. The original capital, which is in a museum at Sarnath, is the basis for India's state emblem.

imperial workshop, found over an area stretching from the neighbourhood of Delhi to Bihar. Made of fine-grained sandstone quarried at Chunar near Varanasi (Benares), the monolithic shafts taper gently toward the top. They are without a base and, in the better preserved examples, are capped by campaniform lotus capitals supporting an animal

emblem. The entire pillar was carefully burnished to a bright lustre commonly called the "Maurya polish." The most famous of these monuments is the lion capital at Sarnath, consisting of the front half of four identical animals joined back to back. There is a naturalistic emphasis on build and musculature, and the modelling is hard, vigorous, and energetic, stressing physical strength and power. Very similar, if not at the same level of achievement, is the quadruple lion capital at Sanchi. Single lions are found at Vaishali (Bakhra), Rampurva, and Lauriya Nandangarh. The Vaishali pillar is heavy and squat, and the animal lacks the verve of the other animals—features, according to some, designating it as an early work, executed before the Mauryan style attained its maturity. By contrast, the Rampurva lion, finished with painstaking and concise artistry, represents the style at its best. His smooth, muscled contours, wiry sinews, rippling, flamboyant mane, and alert stance reveal the work of a superior artist. An example at Lauriya Nandangarh is interesting because the pillar and the lion are both complete and in their original place, giving a clear idea of the column as it appeared to its contemporaries.

The lion was the animal most often represented, but figures of elephants and bulls are also known. At Dhauli in Orissa, the fore part of an elephant is carved out of rock on a terrace above a boulder that carries several of Ashoka's edicts. The modelling here is soft and gentle, and the plump, fleshy qualities of the young animal's body, seen as emerging from the rock, are suffused with warmth and natural vitality. Since the contrast with the rather formal, heraldic lions could not be more complete, the sculpture clearly testifies to the simultaneous existence of a style different from that of the lion capitals. The style might very well represent the indigenous tradition of plastic form that appears consistently in later art and also in some of the animal capitals made in the imperial atelier, notably the damaged elephant that once crowned the pillar at Sankisa and, above all, the splendid bull from Rampurva. In this great work of art, the two opposing concepts of form merge in a work of harmonious power. The pronounced naturalism comes from the same source as do the lions, but the tense line and hard modelling yield to a form that wells from within and at the same time is given stability and strength by a vision imposed from without.

The sudden appearance of Mauryan art with seemingly no tradition behind it has led to speculation that it was the creation of foreign artists, either Achaemenian or Hellenistic. Persian influence, particularly in the lotus capitals and the figures of lions can hardly be denied, but what is remarkable is the drastic reinterpretation of alien forms by Indian artists. This is a process that is repeatedly seen in the history of Indian art.

Besides the animal sculpture, some human figures, more or less life size, can also be assigned to the Mauryan period, though scholarly opinion is by no means unanimous on the point. Among the most important are three images discovered at Patna (ancient Pataliputra, the Mauryan capital), two of which are representations of *yakshas*, the popular male divinities associated with cults of fertility, and the third, found at Didarganj (a section of Patna), a representation of a *yakshi*, or female divinity. Stylistically the images are very similar. The standing *yakshas* (Indian Museum, Kolkata) are powerful creatures; the ponderous weight of their bodies, together with a certain refined appreciation of the soft flesh, is admirably rendered. The Didarganj *yakshi* (Patna Museum), a masterpiece, displays the Indian ideal of female beauty, the heavy hips and full breasts strongly emphasizing the maternal aspect. In a nude torso discovered at Lopanipur, the sophisticated and sensitive treatment of the surfaces and the gentle blending planes that avoid all harsh accents produce a work of much refinement.

Small stone discs (also called ring stones because several of them are perforated in the centre), found from Taxila to Patna, are clearly connected with the cult of a nude mother goddess. They represent Mauryan sculpture on a smaller and more intimate scale but characterized by the same refined and exquisite workmanship. They are executed in bas-relief, which became the favourite form of sculpture in the subsequent period.

The terra-cotta art of the Mauryan period is best represented by a substantial group of figurines, modelled for the most part, the clay sculptor performing work in his medium at the same level as the artist working in stone. Patna has yielded a large number of such works, but examples are found throughout the Gangetic Plain. The clothing and jewelry on the figurines are heavy and elaborate, the modelling, particularly of the head, is sensitive, and the expression is often one of great charm and refinement. There are also more archaic examples, distinguished by flat bodies, enormous hips, and modelled heads and breasts.

Indian sculpture in the 2nd and 1st centuries BCE

The Mauryan empire collapsed in the early years of the 2nd century BCE, and with it passed the art with which it was intimately related. The sculpture that is found throughout India from the middle of the 2nd century BCE is startlingly different, but the process by which this change took place in a relatively short period of time is not fully understood. Several schools, sharing common features but nevertheless possessing distinct individual characteristics, are known to have existed. The history of the schools of northern India is somewhat obscure, largely due to the great destruction wrought in the Gangetic heartland; but there appears to have flourished there and in adjacent areas a school of great importance represented by the remains discovered at Bharhut, Sanchi, Mathura, and Buddh Gaya. Western India had its own school, as revealed in the sculptures decorating the cave temples, notably those of Bhaja, Pitalkhora, and Karli. In the southeast, the important school of Andhradesha flourished in the Krishna River valley at Amaravati, Jaggayyapeta, and associated sites; and in eastern India, what is now the modern state of Orissa, made its

contribution in the rock-cut sculptures at Udayagiri-Khandagiri. The distinctive schools, though spread over a subcontinent, were not isolated from each other. The contacts fostered by a flourishing trade and by the constant movement of pilgrims were always very close, and it was never long before developments in one part of India were echoed in another.

Judging from extant remains, artists of the earlier period (c. 3rd century BCE) preferred figures carved in the round, relief sculpture being quantitatively quite insignificant. By contrast, it was sculpture in low relief that was favoured in the first two centuries before Christ; the earlier tradition was not quite forgotten, but figures carved in the round are relatively few. Although there is no stylistic difference, relief sculpture is here considered first according to the various regional schools, and sculpture in the round is treated separately.

Indian sculpture in the 2nd and 1st centuries BCE: relief sculpture of northern and central India

Among the most important, and perhaps the earliest, remains in northern India are reliefs from the great stupa at Bharhut, dating approximately to the middle of the 2nd century BCE. The work, suggesting a style imitating wooden sculpture, is characterized by essentially cubical forms, flat planes that meet at sharp angles, and very elaborate and precisely detailed ornamentation of surfaces. Most of the sculpture was confined to the railing of the stupa. Some of the supporting posts bear large image of *yakshas* and *yakshis* of popular religion, now clearly pressed into the service of Buddhism, while most of the others are decorated with medallions in the centre and crescent-shaped motifs, or lunates, at the top and bottom, all filled with lotus motifs. Some medallions contain amorous couples, the overflowing pot, the goddess Shri standing on lotuses while being ceremonially bathed by elephants and other symbols of abundance; still others contain the earliest illustrations of events in the Buddha's life and of narratives of his former incarnations as related in the *Jataka* tales (a collection of tales about the Buddha). Although compositions are crowded, great economy of expression is evident because the artist confines himself to the representation of essentials. Figures are often carved in horizontal rows, sometimes asymmetrically, adapting themselves awkwardly to the circular space of the medallion. Continuous narrative, in which events succeeding in time are shown in the same space, is often resorted to—the first occurrence of what was to become a favourite narrative technique. There is no attempt at establishing any interrelationship, psychological or compositional, between the various figures, each of which is strictly confined within its own space. The faces are masklike, without trace of emotion, lending a solemn and hieratic quality to their expression. Trapped between the background and a frontal plane beyond which they are not allowed to project, the figures are in a sense strictly two-dimensional, more so than in any other style of Indian sculpture. Often, however—particularly in the treatment of animals—the artist is more relaxed, giving glimpses of intimate observation and a natural rendering that anticipates the direction of future development. Like the posts,

the top part, or coping, of the stone rail is also carved on both faces; on one of them is a continuous creeper bearing lotus flowers, leaves, and buds; on the other, again the winding stem of a creeper, but bearing other good things of life—such as clothes, jewelry, and fruits—and also scenes illustrating *Jataka* stories.

Bharhut is an extremely important monument inasmuch as it seems to mark a new beginning after the refined and naturalistic art of the Mauryan empire. The sophistication, in spite of the archaic, hieratic manner, would indicate that a considerable body of sculptural tradition, particularly in wood, preceded it; but of this no traces have survived. Be that as it may, Bharhut states for the first time, and at some length, themes and motifs that would henceforth remain a part of Indian sculpture.

Stray finds of sculpture at Mathura and other sites in modern Uttar Pradesh indicate that the Bharhut style was spread over a large part of northern India, particularly the region roughly between that city and Varanasi and Buddh Gaya in the east. A closely related style is also found at Sanchi in eastern Malava, where a representative example is the sculpture of the railing of Stupa II. Although the themes and motifs found at Bharhut occur here, narrative representations are all but absent. The style is almost identical; the stiff and rigid contours are a little softer, but both the scale and richness of Bharhut are missing.

It is the sculpture of the four gateways (*toranas*) of the Great Stupa (Stupa I) at Sanchi, however, that is the principal glory of that site, carrying the promise of the Bharhut style to its fulfillment. The *toranas*, four in number, were attached to the plain railing around the middle of the 1st century BCE. They consist of square posts with capitals supporting a triple architrave, or molded band, with voluted (turned in the shape of a spiral, scroll-shaped ornament) ends and a top crowned with Buddhist symbols. Bracket figures, in the form of *yakshis*, serve as additional supports. All parts of these gates, strongly reminiscent of wooden construction, are covered from top to bottom with the most exquisite sculpture. Subjects and motifs found at Bharhut are also found here, the same profusely flowering lotus stem and associated motifs, the same compositions with figures basically arranged in horizontal rows, the same love for clear detail; but to all of these are added a truly voluminous sense of form, a smoother and more energetic movement, and a keen appreciation for the forms of nature, all of which endow the sculpture with a naïve and sensuous beauty unparalleled in Indian art.

Departures from the Bharhut style are particularly striking in the narrative reliefs. Their greater depth, taken together with their crowded composition, results in the background, visible at Bharhut, being submerged in shadow. The figures, in all their richness and abundance, flow out from the dark ground, secured in place by the frame of the panels. The Bharhut angular silhouette and the rigid, severe outline of the body yields at Sanchi to a gently swelling plasticity, animated by a soft, breathing quality that molds the contours without strain or tension. There is a pronounced concern with the organization of composition, and the narration is often leisurely and discursive; the artist does not just tell

the basic story but also lingers over the details, amplifying them to give a vivid picture of everyday life. The emotional monotone of Bharhut survives in some Sanchi sculptures, but in others it is superseded by joyous faces and the emotional impact of vivid gesture and movement. Dejection is written large on the faces of the soldiers of Mara's army, who had tried to disturb the Buddha's meditation, as they stagger away from the scene of defeat, and the sensuousness of the amorous scenes is successfully evoked by the tender and intimate gestures of the couples. No longer transfixed in their own space, they turn to look at each other lovingly, responding to each other with a deeply felt understanding.

Long and elaborate bas-reliefs carved on the architraves of the *toranas* are the summit of the Sanchi sculptor's art. Among the finest are representations of the wars for the relics, the defeat of Mara, the *Vishvantara Jataka*, and the *Shaddanta Jataka*. The compositions are rich and crowded with figures, and are arranged with great skill. Particularly striking is the masterly handling of animals, notably the elephant, whose fleshy body and graceful movement are captured unerringly. Deer, water buffaloes, bulls, monkeys—all of the beasts and birds of the forests—are rendered with a sense of intimacy indicating the artist's sense of the fellowship of man and animal in the world of nature. The lush Indian landscape is often carved with ornamental trees, waterfalls, pools, mountains, and rivers. The Sanchi sculptor also shows a marked preference for architectural settings, filling his compositions with numerous buildings that often provide the spatial context for the action. Entire cities, with surrounding walls, elaborate gate houses, and palatial mansions, are depicted. Depth is achieved by rendering side views, and multiple perspective continues to be the rule.

The several large images of *yakshis* serving as brackets supporting the lowermost architraves of the *toranas* are unique achievements. Like the same goddesses at Bharhut, they are shown in association with a tree to which they cling, but the style is remarkably different. The modelling shows a concern for the charms of the body, stressing the tactile nature of its flesh. The heavy jewelry and clothing that conceal the body are drastically reduced, revealing its nudity. The soft, melting sensuousness of the female form is so greatly emphasized that the belly and the folds of flesh at the waist are almost flabby, redeemed only by the smooth, firm breasts and the tender arms and limbs.

By comparison, reliefs adorning the railing around the Mahabodhi temple at Buddh Gaya (of about the same date or a little earlier) are in a somewhat impoverished idiom, lacking the rich proliferation both of Bharhut and Sanchi. The posts have the usual medallions, lunates filled with lotuses, and reliefs depicting the familiar scenes of Buddhist myth and legend. The artistry of Buddh Gaya, however, is of a lower level of achievement than that at either Bharhut or Sanchi: the relief is deeper than that at Bharhut but shallower than that at the Great Stupa of Sanchi; and crowded compositions are lacking, as are the clear and precise ornament and the rich floral motifs. The Buddh Gaya sculptor, however, though abbreviating even further the iconography of Bharhut, breaks up, as does the Sanchi sculptor, the spatial isolation that so uncompromisingly separated each individual figure at that site.

The great school of Mathura, also, seems to have come into existence about the 2nd century BCE, though its period of greatest activity falls in the first two centuries after Christ. The city was repeatedly sacked in the course of the centuries, which may account for the paucity of materials, but enough has been discovered to reveal that the style, in its early stages, was very similar to that of Bharhut, characterized by flat two-dimensional sculpture decorated with abundant and precise ornament. Several fragments discovered at the site show the gradual stages by which this style evolved, leading to the sculpture of the Great Stupa at Sanchi on the one hand and to Buddh Gaya on the other.

Indian sculpture in the 2nd and 1st centuries BCE: relief sculpture of Andhradesha

Besides the schools of northern India, a very accomplished style also existed in southeast India; the most important sites are Jaggayyapeta and Amaravati, activity at the latter site extending well into the 2nd century CE. The early remains are strikingly similar to those at Bharhut, the relief generally even shallower and the modelling comparatively flat. In contrast to those found in northern India, the proportions of the human body are elongated; but in its flat, cubical modelling, angular, halting contours, and precise, detailed ornamentation, the style is essentially similar to contemporary work elsewhere, right down to the same conventional clothing and jewelry. The nervous, fluid treatment of surfaces, so characteristic of subsequent Andhra sculpture, is already present here. The preferred material is marble rather than the sandstone invariably used in the north.

The style of the Andhradesha school developed in a manner consistent with other regions of India, becoming more voluminous and shedding the early rigidity fairly rapidly. A group of sculptures at Amaravati are characterized by the same qualities that distinguish the work at the Great Stupa of Sanchi: full and lissome forms, modelling that emphasizes mass and weight, and sensuously rendered surfaces.

Indian sculpture in the 2nd and 1st centuries BCE: relief sculpture of western India

The numerous rock-cut cave temples in the Western Ghats are, comparatively speaking, much less profusely adorned with sculpture than remains from other parts of India. The earliest works are undoubtedly the bas-reliefs on a side wall of the porch of a small monastery at Bhaja. They are commonly interpreted as depicting the god Indra on his elephant and the sun god Surya on his chariot but are more probably illustrations of the adventures of the mythical universal emperor Mandhata. What is immediately evident is that these sculptures are not imitations of wooden prototypes, like those at Bharhut, but, rather, reflect a tradition of terra-cotta sculpture, abundant examples of which are found in northern India and Bengal, where this medium was very popular because of the easy availability of fine clay. The terra-cotta tradition is reflected in the amorphous, spreading forms of Bhaja and in the fine striations used in depicting ornaments and pleated cloth,

techniques natural and appropriate to the fashioning of wet clay. The fact that there are some similarities to the Bharhut style—the stilted postures of the figures and the flat contours of the body, for example—indicates that the beginnings of the western Indian school would also have to be placed about the middle of the 2nd century BCE.

The next major group of sculptures in western India have been found at Pitalkhora. The colossal plinth of a monastery decorated with a row of elephants, the large figures of the door guardians, and several fragments recovered during the course of excavations are among the more important remains. A great proportion of the work represents an advance over the style of Bhaja, though features derived from terra-cotta sculpture continue to be found: the figures are carved in greater depth and volume, but the texture of the drapery, the soft contours of the body, and the high relief of the jewelry, which sometimes gives the impression of having been fashioned separately and then applied, testify to the continuing strength of the terra-cotta tradition. Although the hard line and sharp cutting of some sculpture is reminiscent of the earlier, wood-carving tradition as seen at Bharhut, the forms are more appropriate to the stone medium. Moreover, the expression is more explicit; and for the first time, both gently smiling and boldly laughing figures of *yakshas* appear, as well as the figure of a lover blissfully drunk on wine offered to him by his beloved. These features are also found in the later sculpture of the Great Stupa at Sanchi and, to a more pronounced extent, in the sculpture of the Mathura school of the 1st centuries CE—for example, in the happily smiling *yakshis* from Bhutesar.

The cave temple at Kondane has, above the entrance hall, four beautiful panels depicting pairs of dancers. The forms retain the robust and full modelling of the more developed sculpture at Pitalkhora, but to this is added an ease of movement and considerable rhythmic grace. Traces of the terra-cotta tradition are now totally absent; nor do they occur in the next phase, best represented by a group of sculptures found in the rock-cut temples and monasteries at Bedsa and Nasik and in the *caitya*, or temple proper, at Karli. Sculpture at all these sites shows many affinities to the Great Stupa at Sanchi and should be approximately contemporary or a little earlier. Easily the most outstanding achievements of this region and period, and for that matter one of the greatest achievements of the Indian sculptor, are the large panels, depicting amorous couples, located in the entrance porch of the Karli *caitya*. Here the promise of early work achieves its fulfillment, the full weighty forms imbued with a warm, joyous life and a free, assured movement. The resemblance to work at the Great Stupa of Sanchi is obvious, though these figures at Karli are on a much larger scale and possess a massiveness and monumentality that is a characteristic of the distinct western Indian idiom.

Indian sculpture in the 2nd and 1st centuries BCE: relief sculpture of Orissa

Sculpture decorating the monasteries cut into the twin hills of Udayagiri and Khandagiri in Orissa represents yet another early Indian local idiom. The work is not of one period but

extends over the first two centuries before Christ; the stages of development roughly parallel the styles observed at Sanchi Stupa No. II, Buddh Gaya, and the Great Stupa at Sanchi, but they possess, like other regional schools, fairly distinct and individual features. The earliest sculptures are the few simple reliefs found in the Alakapuri cave, humble works that recall the bas-reliefs of Sanchi Stupa II. The Mancapuri, Tatoka Gumpha, and Ananta cave sculptures—particularly the image of Surya riding a chariot—are more advanced and resemble work at Buddh Gaya. The forms are heavy and solid and lack the accomplished movement of the later cave sculpture adorning the Rani Gumpha monastery. These, like other sculptures here, are in a poor state of preservation, but they represent the finest achievements at the site. Most remarkable is a long frieze, stretching between the arched doorways of the top story, representing a series of incidents that have not yet been identified. The work parallels that of the Great Stupa at Sanchi, with the same supple modelling and crowded compositions. At the same time there is a nervous agitation, a fluid, agile movement together with a decided preference for tall, slender human figures. The reliefs on the guard rooms of Rani Gumpha are also quite remarkable, depicting forested landscapes filled with rocks from which waterfalls flow into lakes that are the sporting grounds of wild elephants. The fine work of this cave strikes a romantic and lyrical note seldom found in Indian art.

Indian sculpture in the 2nd and 1st centuries BCE: sculpture in the round and terra-cotta

The most important sculpture in the round are the life-size or colossal images of *yakshas* and *yakshis*, which reinterpret forms established by the two Patna *yakshas* and the Didarganj *yakshi* of the Mauryan period—very much as a few animal capitals, particularly the *makaras* (a crocodile-like creature) from Kaushambi and Vidisha (Besnagar), echo the tradition of the superb Mauryan animal capitals. It is the *yaksha* figures, however, that deserve special attention, for they played a significant part in the iconographic developments of the 1st century CE and later and contributed substantially to the imagery of the anthropomorphic Buddha icon.

The most famous of the *yaksha* images is a colossal figure recovered from the village of Parkham, near Mathura (Archaeological Museum). It is about 8.7 feet (2.7 metres) in height, and, though the two hands are broken and the head is considerably damaged, it is an image of great strength. Its squat neck, its head set close to the body, which tends toward corpulence, its swelling belly restrained by a flat band, and a broad chest adorned with necklaces—all of these features contribute to an image turgid with earthy power. The back is flat and cursively finished, so that the figure has the appearance more of a bifacial relief than of an image carved in the round. Although the forms retain some of the cubical modelling of Bharhut, the swelling limbs and torso have a massive weightiness that makes the image an appropriate representation of a divinity that presides over the productive processes of nature and endows plenty and abundance on his worshippers.

The Mathura region seems to have been an important centre of *yaksha* worship, for several images, most of them fragmentary, have been discovered there. Some images have also been found from the ancient city of Vidisha (Vidisha Museum), one of which is even larger than the Parkham example and is in a better state of preservation. The god holds a bag in one hand (the other was held below the chest), and the hair is tied in a large top knot over the forehead. The image is accompanied by a female consort (*yakshi*), wide-hipped and full-breasted, who also emphasizes and personifies the powers of fertility.

The widespread nature of the cult is evidenced by the occurrence of *yaksha* images throughout India. Fragments in the round (not to speak of the relief representations in a Buddhist context) of the 2nd to 1st centuries BCE have been found from Madhyadesha, Orissa, Rajasthan, Andhradesha, and Maharashtra. At Pitalkhora there is an exceptionally fine image of a *yaksha* conceived as a potbellied dwarf carrying a shallow bowl on his head; the features, with a gently laughing mouth, are suffused with good humour. Similar *yakshas*, employed as atlantes (male figures used as supporting elements), are also found on the western gateway of the Great Stupa at Sanchi and at other sites, notably Sarnath.

The latest in the series of cult images is the image of the Yaksha Manibhadra, from Pawaya (Gwalior Museum). The sculpture is at present headless, but the rest of the body is well preserved. The right hand holds a fly whisk that flares over the shoulder; the modelling of the legs and torso is sensitive, and the folds of the garment wrapped around the body are full and voluminous, recalling the style of sculpture at Sanchi.

The terra-cotta sculpture of the period consists mainly of relief plaques made from molds found at numerous sites in northern India. These generally depict popular divinities; a richly dressed female figure loaded with profuse jewelry, obviously a mother goddess, is the favoured subject. Scenes from daily life also abound—as well as what appear to be illustrations of current myths and stories. Superb examples have been found from Mathura, Ahichhatra, Kaushambi, Tamluk, and Chandraketugarh. The workmanship is often of the most exquisite clarity and delicacy, the style paralleling that of contemporary stone sculpture.

Indian sculpture from the 1st to 4th centuries CE

This period is characterized by the dominance in northern India of the ancient school of Mathura. Other schools, such as those that flourished at Sarnath and Sanchi in the first two centuries before Christ, for example, were markedly restricted in their artistic output. Much of their sculpture was imported from Mathura, and the few images they produced locally were strongly influenced by Mathura work. The narrative bas-relief tradition, consisting of elaborate compositions of edificatory character, was on the wane, and the emphasis was on carving individual figures, either in high relief or in the round. For the first time, images appear of the Buddha, bodhisattvas, and various other divinities including specifically Hindu images representing the gods Vishnu, Shiva, Varaha, and Devi slaying the buffalo

demon; some of these figures begin to feature several arms, a characteristic of later iconography. There are also many images of *yakshis*, often in most alluring attitudes and gestures. Their enticing bodies are now presented as unified organic entities, lacking all traces of the stiff, puppetlike aspect that had not been entirely overcome even at the Great Stupa of Sanchi. During this period, also, a fresh incursion of foreign influence by way of western Asia was received, quickly assimilated, and transformed in the characteristic manner of Indian art.

The school of Gandhara, with Taxila in Pakistan as its centre and stretching into eastern Afghanistan, flourished alongside the Kushan school of Mathura. It is of a startlingly different aspect, stressing a relatively naturalistic rendering of form, ultimately of Greco-Roman origin. The school evolved a distinct type of Buddha image and was also rich in relief sculptures depicting Buddhist myth and legend. Drawing largely on Indian traditions of composition, it nevertheless reinterpreted them in its own manner. The schools of Mathura and Gandhara were in close proximity and undoubtedly influenced each other, but essentially each adheres to its own concept of style.

The ancient Indian relief style found its fullest expression and development at neither Mathura nor Gandhara but in Andhradesha, notably at the great sites of Amaravati and Nagarjunikonda. Railing pillars and other parts of stupas decorated with *Jataka* tales and scenes from the Buddha's life are found in great number and are of the most exquisite quality. Free-standing images of the Buddha, on the other hand, are relatively rare, being found only toward the close of the period.

Indian sculpture from the 1st to 4th centuries CE: Mathura

One of the most important contributions of the school of Mathura was the development of the cult image of the Buddha, who had been previously represented by aniconic (not made as a likeness) symbols. There is a certain amount of controversy about whether Mathura or Gandhara originated the Buddha image, which appears to be insoluble in view of the circumstantial nature of the evidence. It is possible that the two schools independently developed their own separate types of images; but, at least as far as the Mathura image is concerned, it is clear that it is a natural development from the tradition of large *yaksha* sculptures found in this region. The development can easily be seen in a famous image (discovered at Sarnath and now in the Sarnath Museum) of Mathura manufactured and dedicated by the monk Bala. Carved in the round, the image is shown in a pose of strict frontality, the left hand held at the waist and the right arm, now damaged, originally raised to the shoulder—a posture immediately recalling that of the *yaksha* images. The jewelry, however, is appropriately omitted, and the body is clothed in simple monastic garments. The modelling throughout is strong and sensuous, and the radiant energy of the body, its affirmative, outgoing movement, is more appropriate to the personality of a *yaksha* than to that of the Buddha. This standing Buddha image, as seen in the Bala statue, is the standard Mathura type, several examples of which are known. Along with this one, a similar, seated

type developed, of which the best example is the splendid image known as the Katra Buddha (Archaeological Museum). The modelling of the body is refined, the breasts characteristically heavy and prominent, and the flesh of the torso, with its subtle modulations, as convincingly rendered as the Bala image.

The new trends formulated early by the Mathura school do not indicate a sharp break from the traditions of the earlier schools. This is clear in a series of magnificent *ayagapatas*, or stone tablets originally set up outside stupas to receive worship and offerings. They are usually square or rectangular and richly decorated with auspicious and religious symbols as well as angelic and mythical beings. The extremely decorative, lavish surface treatment gives the immediate impression of a great profusion of multiple forms, akin in feeling to the sculpture of the Great Stupa of Sanchi. The organization of these forms, however, has none of the easy freedom of Sanchi. The figures, for example, are often cast in a regular, winding shape imitating the movement of the undulating lotus creeper. The same movement is seen in rows of animals depicted with haunches raised and chests touching the ground, features seen in earlier art but now much more emphatically stylized. The bodies of the animals also begin to be overpowered by vegetal forms, the tails, for example, terminating in foliate tips; in a later age, this tendency results in the almost total disintegration of animal shapes under the pressure of the floral.

It is not to these bas-reliefs, however, that one turns for the most delightful creations of the Mathura school (for they are in fact the last vestiges of a style rapidly passing out of favour) but to the large number of railing pillars usually carved with representation of *yakshis* engaged in playful and enticing activities such as plucking blossoms from trees or leaning on its branches, dancing, bathing under a waterfall, and adorning themselves. Among the most beautiful of these is a group that was recovered from Kankali Tila and now in the State Museum at Lucknow. The modelling of the figures is generally heavy, the soft, plump bodies suffused with a slow, languorous movement. What is important, however, is the emotion, which is no longer expressed in the face alone but in the whole attitude of the body. The pensive mood of a woman holding a lamp, for instance, is evoked not only by the serene features of the face but by the gentle sway of the relaxed body. Present throughout is a fresh movement of life, a marked striving for diverse and varied effects of posture, movement, expression, and even dress and ornament that brings about vital changes in the nature of Indian sculpture. A remarkable group of railing posts decorated with *yakshi* images, which were recovered from Bhutesar near Mathura (Archaeological Museum), represent an even more refined achievement than the Kankali Tila figures. The heavy proportions, in spite of the full breasts and the wide hips, have been overcome; the happy faces express carefree joy, and the postures of the body are so alive with rhythm as to give the impression of a dancing figure.

Mathura, during this period, was ruled by the Kushan (Kushana) dynasty. A group of portrait sculptures of these rulers (Archaeological Museum), recovered from a village called Mat in the environs of Mathura, gives an interesting glimpse of the foreign influences entering

India at the time. One of them (unfortunately lacking the head) represents the emperor Kaniska wearing heavy boots, a tunic, and a coat, and leaning on a mace. The image is quite different not only in dress but also in style from other contemporary works, being essentially linear, with the forms entirely set into the surface. The surfaces have little ornamentation and are marked by extreme simplicity; they are also uncompromisingly stiff and rigid. It is possible that these images represent attempts by a Mathura artist to imitate a style preferred by his imperial masters; but it was not long before the foreign elements were assimilated into the Mathura style proper, for later images of Kushan chiefs have the same expanding and voluminous form that characterizes other sculptures of this school. A large number of ornamental motifs that now appear in India for the first time undergo a similar process of transformation.

The extent of Mathura influence on Indian art of this period can be gauged by the sculpture of the school found at several sites in different parts of northern India, notably Ahichhatra, Kaushambi, Sarnath, and Sanchi. Most of these sites had been flourishing centres earlier, but only a very limited amount of sculpture was produced during the ascendancy of the Mathura school; and whatever local sculpture was produced at this time was heavily influenced by the Mathura style. At Sarnath, for example, both the Bala Buddha imported from Mathura and its local imitations have been found.

Ivory plaques discovered at Bagrām (Begrām) in Afghanistan are closely related to the school of Mathura. These are of great importance; for, though ivory must have been a favourite medium of sculpture, little has been preserved of the early work. Most of it is in very low engraved relief, with fluent, sweeping outlines. The figures are depicted in easy and elegant postures, and the workmanship often attains considerable virtuosity.

Indian sculpture from the 1st to 4th centuries CE: Gandhara

Contemporary with the school of Mathura, and extending almost into the 6th century, is the Gandhara school, whose style is unlike anything else in Indian art. It flourished in a region known in ancient times as Gandhara, with its capital at Taxila in the Punjab, and in adjacent areas including the Swāt Valley and eastern Afghanistan. The output of the school was very large; numerous images, mostly of Buddhas and bodhisattvas, and narrative reliefs illustrating scenes from the Buddha's life and legends have been found. The favoured material is gray slate or blue schist and, particularly during the later phases, stucco. Except for objects excavated at a few well-known sites (such as Taxila, Peshawar, and the Swāt Valley, in Pakistan, and Jalālābād, Hadda, and Bamiyan, in Afghanistan), most of the finds have been the result of casual discovery or clandestine treasure hunts and plunder, so their correct provenance is not known. If to this are added the large variety of idioms that appear to have existed simultaneously and the total absence of securely dated images, the wide divergence of scholarly opinion with regard to the schools' evolution can be understood. In the present day, there is general agreement, however, that its most flourishing period

probably coincided with Kushan rule, particularly the reigns of the emperor Kaniska and his successors, and that the school did not long outlast the growth of the Gupta school in the 5th century.

The origins of the Gandhara style are ultimately Greco-Roman, though, recently, emphasis has been placed on Roman art as the more immediate source. It has also been suggested that the school was created by foreign craftsmen imported into India and by their Indian pupils.

The Gandhara school is also credited by some scholars with the invention of the anthropomorphic Buddha image. Whether this is correct or not, the Gandhara image is quite different from that of Mathura and illustrates the difference between the two schools. Instead of the powerful images directly descended from *yaksha* prototypes, the Gandhara version is an adaptation of an Apollo figure, with rather sweet and sentimental features. The definite volume and substance given to the pleated folds of the monastic robes make this image more naturalistic than anything found in Indian art. At the same time, the iconographical features are of Indian origin. Large numbers of bodhisattva images conceived in the image of royalty, some with strongly individualized facial features, have also been found.

In contrast to Mathura, narrative relief sculpture was very popular in Gandhara art. Again, in composition and iconography these reliefs are largely dependent on the earlier Indian schools, but the style is quite distinct. Instead of continuous narrative, incidents separated in time are separately represented, though often arranged in sequence. Violent emotions are realistically rendered. The compositions range from simple horizontal placement of figures to rich and complex arrangements, which often attempt to render space illusionistically.

In the course of time, Indian influence was increasingly felt in the art of Gandhara, and an abstract vision began to obscure the Greco-Roman naturalism of the earlier forms. In spite of the new influence (and the many graceful but cloying stucco sculptures that are representative of this late phase) the style shows no signs of vital change. This conservatism, together with the large artistic production, gives an overall impression of considerable monotony. Without any real roots in India and with marked foreign features, the avenues of natural development seem to have been closed to the school, which thus finally disappeared. Nevertheless it made vital contributions to the art of Central and eastern Asia, and several features, drastically transformed, were incorporated in Gupta art.

Indian sculpture from the 1st to 4th centuries CE: Andhradesha

Besides the schools of Mathura and Gandhara, a most accomplished school of sculpture flourished in Andhradesha during the three centuries after Christ, the most important centres being Amaravati and Nagarjunakonda. The remains consist mainly of carved railings and rectangular slabs that decorated the great Buddhist stupas, which have largely

disappeared. The finds are thus fragmentary and belong to several phases of construction or to separate monuments spanning the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd centuries CE.

Unlike the school of Mathura, which concentrates on the carving of single figures, the Amaravati school carried to the fullest limit of its development the ancient tradition of relief sculpture, which flourished in the two centuries before Christ at sites such as Bharhut, Sanchi, and Amaravati itself. The marble railing posts are decorated with central medallions and lunates at the top and bottom, all filled with lotus flowers of a very rich design. Often the medallions also contain reliefs illustrating scenes from the Buddha's life and from the *Jataka* stories, and these are the principal glory of the site.

Two broad phases in the development of narrative relief can be distinguished. In the first, the artist builds on the achievements of early relief sculpture as seen on the Great Stupa of Sanchi. The forms are still comparatively heavy, the figures increasingly soft and fleshy, the movement freer but still pervaded by a sense of calm repose. This type of work, represented by relatively few examples, is followed by a phase in which the compositions achieve an extraordinary elaboration and complexity. Most striking is the restless, energetic movement, often nervous and flurried, that possesses the participants in any given scene. Complex relationships and patterns are established between the figures; and space is so articulated that the eye participates in the swirling inner movement of the composition that effectually dissolves the ground on which the figures are carved, while the figures themselves flow out in an endless movement from the ground. The setting is dramatic in the extreme. The loving workmanship, reminiscent of ivory carving, and the superb technical proficiency mark the Amaravati reliefs as the culminating point of the entire relief style.

The figures, of both men and women, are of unprecedented suppleness and plasticity, the forms rendered in every variety of torsion and flexion. A fluent, gliding line, often more appropriate to painting than to sculpture, encloses the figures, and pervading the whole is a subtle voluptuousness. The reliefs are often only nominally religious, a pretext for the sculptor's pleasure in representing the leisured and sophisticated life of the time.

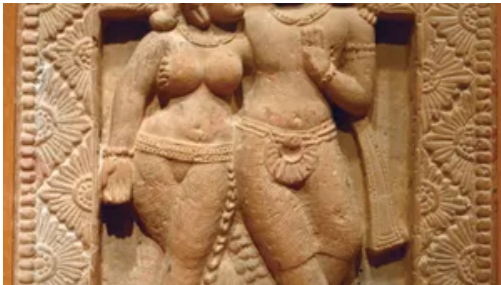
Nagarjunakonda sculpture marks the last phase of the relief style. The figures become stiffer and puppetlike, the patterns of movement frozen and mechanical but still possessing the energy and richness that always characterize this style.

The Buddha is represented in Andhradesha by both symbolic and anthropomorphic forms. The iconographic formula developed shows him clad in a rather thick garment with stylized folds, and the postures are not as formal and hieratic as the Mathura. This type of Buddha exercised considerable influence in the development of the Buddha image in Ceylon (Sri Lanka). In several other features as well, the Andhra style also contributed to the development of early sculpture in Southeast Asia.

Indian sculpture from the 1st to 4th centuries CE: terra-cotta

The quality of terra-cotta figurines of this period is generally inferior to work produced in the first two centuries BCE. Many heads of crude workmanship, with protruding eyes, apparently representing foreigners, were found at sites such as Mathura, Ahichhatra, and Kaushambi. At the same time, there are some well-modelled heads that imitate the style of stone sculpture and are equally expressive.

Gupta period (c. 4th–6th centuries CE)



Gupta terra-cotta

Mithuna, terra-cotta sculpture from
India, Gupta period, 5th century

CE

; in the Honolulu Academy of Arts.

During the 4th and the 5th centuries, when much of northern India was ruled by the Gupta dynasty, Indian sculpture entered what has been called its classic phase. The promise of the earlier schools was now fully realized, and at the same time new forms and artistic ideals were formulated that served as the source for development in succeeding centuries. The more or less sensuous and earthy rendering of form was drastically transformed, so that artistic expression closely conformed to the religious vision. The forms are refined and treated with sure and unsurpassed elegance. The volumes, impelled by an inner life, still

swell from within but are restrained and controlled, made to flow in smooth and abstract rhythms in an organic and unified concept in which the sensual and the spiritual are inextricably blended. The edificatory, didactic intent of early relief sculpture is abandoned; instead, the works produced are pronouncedly meditative; and the repose and calm that settles on the images of the Buddha, the master of the inner contemplative life, is also seen on images of other divinities. Decorative ornament is in perfect harmony with the volumes it adorns, each emphasizing the other, so that in every respect this classic style of the Gupta period is one of great composure and perfect balance.

Gupta period: Mathura

The impetus for the new schools seems to have come from Mathura, which is hardly surprising in view of the preponderant role played by the city in the preceding period. The transformation into the new idiom is best illustrated by a splendid image of the Buddha which is dated 384 CE (Indian Museum, Kolkata). Memories of the rather massive and ponderous weight of the earlier style are present, but the calm face no longer looks out at the world; rather, the vision is turned within, the mood being one of serene contemplation. The style, which consistently uses the local red sandstone, undergoes further refinement, seen in a series of magnificent life-size Buddha images of the 5th century (now scattered in museums throughout the world). The more delicate face radiates a feeling of calm inner bliss, and the body is most subtly modelled by smoothly flowing planes that both suggest the swelling force of life and subordinate it to the spiritual vision of the whole. Mathura images

generally show the Buddha wearing a diaphanous robe, the folds of which are rendered by stringlike ridges in a reinterpretation of a Gandhara convention. The gestures of the hand are delicate and varied. The hair is usually rendered by rows of small curls that conceal the conical protuberance. These Mathura images established an iconographical type that became the norm for the Buddha image.

In addition to the Buddha figure, Mathura has yielded large numbers of images of the various Hindu divinities, particularly Vishnu-Krishna. This is in keeping with the increasing strength of the various Hindu cults and the intimate association of Mathura with the god Krishna. The famous image of Vishnu from Katra Keshavadeva in Mathura is one of the finest (National Museum, New Delhi). The god is conceived as a royal figure, wearing a crown and appropriate jewelry, his features imbued with a dignified calm that is suitable to his function as the preserver and is also characteristic of most Gupta art.

Gupta period: Sarnath

This famous centre of Indian art developed a sweeter and more elegant version of the Buddha image than Mathura's. Instead of the rather strict frontal posture, the weight of the body is thrown more on one leg, resulting in a very subtle contrapposto position, in which the hips, shoulders, and head are turned in different directions. This lends a certain movement to the figure, so that it does not quite possess the static, steadfast quality of Mathura. The robes are no longer ridged with folds but are plain, and the surface of the stone is even more abstractly handled than is the Mathura. The faces are heart-shaped, the transitions from one part of the body to another smoother, so that the images have great refinement even if they do not possess the strength of Mathura. The characteristic Sarnath style, the preferred material of which is the local buff Chunar sandstone, seems to have developed in the late 5th century, the few earlier works being closer to the Mathura school. The most famous image from the site and one of the masterpieces of Indian art is that of the seated Buddha preaching (Sarnath Museum). It is exceptionally well preserved and delicately carved. The face, with serene features and a gentle smile playing on the lips, suggests the joy of supreme spiritual achievement. The halo behind the Buddha is also very beautifully carved, with exquisite floral patterns. Large numbers of Buddha and bodhisattva images have been excavated at Sarnath and are to be found in the museum at the site and in major collections throughout the world.

Gupta period: central India

In addition to the major schools of Sarnath and Mathura, important sculpture of the 5th and 6th centuries is found at several sites in central India. The sculptures here are often in their original locations, surviving not as isolated images torn from their architectural context but in association with the temples of which they formed a part. At Udayagiri, near Vidisha, are a series of simple rock-cut caves of the opening years of the 5th century. The sculpture, made of soft stone, has suffered greatly, but whatever has survived reveals a style that stresses

strength and power. Perhaps the most magnificent work is a great relief panel depicting the boar incarnation of Vishnu lifting the earth goddess from the watery deeps into which she had been dragged by a demon. The massive figure of the god, with the body of a man and the head of a boar, is carved in a surging movement across the face of the rock, the goddess resting easily on his shoulder, while a host of beings, human and divine, celebrate this great triumph.

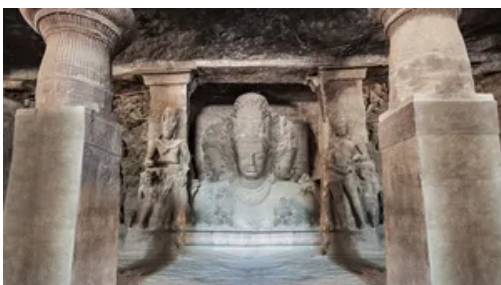
The Shiva temple at Bhumara has also yielded some sculpture of fine quality. The stone is carved with great precision and skill, nowhere more evident than in the handling of exuberant floral ornament. Little in Indian decorative sculpture can match the brilliance of the large panels filled with lotus stems and floriated scrolls discovered at this site and at Nachna Kuthara.

Some of the finest Gupta sculpture adorns the walls of the Vishnu temple at Deogarh. Particularly striking are three large relief panels depicting Vishnu lying on the serpent Shesha, the elephant's rescue, and the penance of Nara-Narayana. The compositions tend to be dramatic; the carving and decoration, sumptuous, the sturdy forms recalling Mathura rather than the attenuated grace of Sarnath. The doorframe of the sanctum of this temple is an especially fine example of architectural decoration popular in this period. Bands of floral scrolls, amorous couples, and flying angels of great elegance are carved around the entrance. Particularly impressive are groups of worshippers at the base, their swaying bodies related to each other with an easy rhythm.



Ajanta Caves: reclining Buddha

Reclining Buddha statue, Ajanta Caves, north-central Maharashtra state, India.



Sadashiva

Sadashiva, stone relief in a cave temple on Elephanta Island, India.

Gupta period: Maharashtra

A great revival of artistic activity seems to have taken place in this region during the reign of the Vakataka dynasty and its successors, best expressed in the splendid sculpture decorating the cave temples of Ajanta and Elephanta. The idioms established in the North were adapted here to the needs of a style that conceived figures on a massive scale, as determined by the demands of the great expanses of rock out of which they were carved. Although the sculpture at Ajanta (mostly of the late 5th century) combines the old weightiness with the new restraint and elegance, the style finds its supreme expression in the magnificent cave temple at Elephanta. The central image of this great temple is of immense size and in deep relief. It represents Shiva in his cosmic aspect, the central head clam, introspective, self-sufficient, and transcending time, the heads to the sides, in their

sensuous beauty and awesome terror, reflecting the creative and the destructive aspects of the supreme divinity.

Gupta period: other regions

The impact of the Gupta style of the 5th and 6th centuries was felt in many parts of India, though actual remains thus far discovered are more abundant in some parts than in others. There appears to have been, in Bihar, a distinct school characterized by rather heavy, compact forms; and Gujarat and southern Rajasthan developed an individual style of considerable voluptuousness and plasticity. Among the notable sculpture of the Idar region are groups of mother goddesses whose massive forms are rendered with an easy grace and intimacy. In the Karnataka country, to the south, the cave temples of Badami reveal yet another distinct idiom, somewhat direct and elemental but nevertheless belonging to the same general style, with local variations, that prevailed over the greater part of India.

Gupta period: terra-cotta

Terra-cotta sculpture, like art in other mediums, was greatly developed. Fairly large and elaborate plaques were used to adorn brick stupas and Hindu temples from Sind to Bengal. The polychrome relief images of the Buddha from Mirpur Khas are delicate and slender, with traces of Gandhara feeling. Representations of divinities and mythological scenes from temples in Bikaner, Ahichhatra, Bhittargaon, and Shravasti are works on a more popular level, possessing an earthy ponderousness. A large number of figurines, particularly fragments of heads with elaborate coiffures and delicate, smiling features, have been found at Rajghat in Varanasi (Benares) and at other sites.

Medieval Indian sculpture

Indian sculpture from the 7th century onward developed, broadly speaking, into two styles that flourished in northern and southern India, respectively. In each of these regions there also developed additional local idioms, so that there was a wide variety of schools. All, however, evolved in a consistent manner, the earlier phase marked by relatively plastic forms, the later phase by a style that emphasizes a more linear rendering. The sculpture was used mainly as a part of the architectural decor, and the quantity required was vast. This often entailed a mechanical production, with the result that works of quality are few in proportion to the numbers.

Besides the two main idioms, the local schools of Maharashtra and Karnataka are of particular interest because they possess considerable individuality and often show both northern and southern features.

Sculpture in bronze was also produced in fairly large quantities in this period. Again, several local schools can be distinguished, the most important of which are those of eastern and southern India.

Medieval Indian sculpture: North India

The history of North Indian sculpture from the 7th to the 9th centuries is one of the more obscure periods in Indian art. Two trends, however, are clear: one exhibits the decline and disintegration of classical forms established during the 5th and 6th centuries; and the other, the evolution of new styles that began to possess overall unity and stability only in the 10th century.

A breakdown of the Gupta formula is observable from at least the 7th century onward, if not a little earlier: harmonious proportion, graceful movement, and supple modelling begin to yield to squat proportions, a halting movement, and a more congealed form. Toward the 8th century, signs of a new movement become evident in a group of sculptures that departs from the progressively lifeless working out of the Gupta idiom. The modelling emphasizes breadth but with a pronounced feeling for rhythm, and the delineation of decorative detail is fairly restrained. In the 9th century, particularly during the second half, a distinct change came over the styles of all of northern India. A new elegance, a richer decorativeness, and a staccato rhythm so characteristic of the medieval styles of the 10th and 11th centuries begin to be clearly seen and felt. Sculpture of this period reaches a standard of elegance never surpassed in the medieval period: the grace and voluminousness of earlier work are modified but not lost; the harsh angularity of later work, avoided. An idea of the style can be formed from an important group of sculptures at Abaneri, the Shiva temple at Indore, and the Teli-ka-Mandir temple at Gwalior, as well as from individual works in various North Indian museums.

With the 10th century, the conventions of North Indian sculpture became fairly well established. The style is represented by examples from such monuments as the Laksmana temple at Khajuraho (dated 941), the Harasnath temple at Mt. Harsha (c. mid-10th century), in Rajasthan, and numerous other sites scattered all over northern India. These works are executed in a style that has become harder and more angular, the figures covered with a profusion of jewelry that tends to obscure the forms it decorates. These features are further accentuated in the 11th century, when many temples of great size, adorned with prodigious amounts of sculpture, were erected all over northern India. There is a decline in the general level of workmanship: the carving is often entirely conventional and lifeless, the features rigid and masklike, and the contours stiff and unyielding. The ornamentation, consisting of a profusion of beaded jewelry, is for the most part as dull, repetitive, and lifeless as the rest of the sculpture. This phase of artistic activity is represented at important centres from Gujarat to Orissa; one of them is Khajuraho, with a vast amount of sculpture, all in a good state of preservation but conceived and executed as perfunctory architectural ornamentation. Not all sculpture, however, is of inferior quality; the hard, metallic carving and angular, stylized line sometimes result in works possessing a cold brilliance.

The 12th century marks the end of traditional sculpture all over northern India, except for a few pockets not yet penetrated by the Islamic invasions. A rigid line imposed itself on the forms, which in turn became desiccated and hard, so that whatever unity of surface may have existed was entirely shattered. A brief revival took place in parts of Gujarat and Rajasthan in the 15th century, but the sculpture merely imitated the work of the late medieval phase. The pure geometry of their forms, however, sometimes results in works possessing a curious archaistic power.

Sculpture in eastern India (consisting of Bangladesh and the modern Indian states of Bihar, West Bengal, and Orissa), though sharing in the broad pattern of development of the rest of northern India, nevertheless represents a distinct idiom. The flatness of planes and angularity of contours are less pronounced, the figures retaining a sense of mass and weight for a greater period of time and to a greater degree. This can be clearly seen in sculpture from Konarak, in Orissa. Dating to the 13th century, the style retains a considerable semblance of plasticity at a period when sculpture in other parts of northern India had assumed a very wooden appearance. In Bihar and Bengal a flourishing school of bronze sculpture also developed, as evidenced by the large number of finds, notably from the sites of Nalanda and Kurkihar. The style generally parallels works in stone, emphasizing plastic values to a great degree. The most flourishing period was the 9th century, when a series of magnificent images representing the gods and goddesses of the Buddhist pantheon were made at Kurkihar and Nalanda. The work of the 10th and 11th centuries is more decorative and often very skillfully and elaborately cast. Of relatively small size and therefore easily transportable, bronze sculpture from this area played an important part in the diffusion of Indian influence in Southeast Asia.

Kashmir sculpture tends to be weightier and more massive than works in other parts of India. Some Gandhara memories survive, particularly in the fleshy rendering of the body and the drapery, but the sculpture is very much a part of the stylistic developments in northern India. Representative examples of the style, dating to around the mid-9th century, have been found from Avantipura. A flourishing school of bronze sculpture also existed, numerous examples having come to light in recent years. One of the finest, discovered at Devsar (Sir Pratap Singh Museum, Srinagar), is a large 9th-century ornamental frame, 6.5 feet (2 metres) high, decorated with various incarnations of Vishnu, all filled with great energy and movement. A good number of ivory images of Kashmir workmanship have also been preserved. These are generally of miniature size, polychromed, and of extremely fine and delicate workmanship. Influences of the Kashmir style of sculpture were strongly felt in the neighbouring Himalayan region, including both Tibet and Nepal.

Medieval Indian sculptures: southern India

The medieval phase in southern India opened with elegant 7th-century sculptures at Mahabalipuram, by far the most impressive of which is a large relief depicting the penance of Arjuna (previously identified as an illustration of the mythical descent of the Ganges). It is

carved on the face of a granite boulder with a deep cleft in the centre, representing a river, down which water actually flowed from a reservoir situated above. On both sides are carved numerous figures of divinities, human beings, and animals that crowd the hermitage where Arjuna, practicing penance, is visited by Shiva. The tall, slender figures, with supple tubular limbs, remotely recall the proportions of Amaravati, now greatly transformed; and the numerous animals, including the elephant herd with its young, show the same intimate feeling for animal life that characterizes all Indian sculpture, but in a manner that has seldom been surpassed.

The light, aerial forms gained stability and strength in subsequent centuries, culminating in superb sculptures adorning small, elegant shrines built during the late 9th century when the Chola dynasty was consolidating its power. The temples at Tiruvalishvaram, Kodumbalur, Kilaiyur, Shrinivasanalur, Kumbakonam, and a host of other sites of this period are only sparingly adorned with sculpture, but it is of superb quality. With the 10th and 11th centuries, South Indian sculpture, like its counterpart in the north though to a lesser degree, was carved in flatter planes and more angular forms, and the fresh, blooming life of earlier work is gradually lost. This can be seen, for example, in the sculpture of the numerous temples of Thanjavur and Gangaikondacholapuram. The subsequent phase, extending up to the 13th century, is represented by work at Darasuram and Tribhuvanam; although the forms become increasingly congealed, brittle works of fine quality—often capturing outer movement with great skill—continue to be produced. Sculpture in southern India continued when artistic activity was interrupted in the north by the Islamic invasions but, in spite of technical virtuosity, became progressively lifeless. Artistic activity continued in the south into the 17th century, the elaborately sculptured halls at Madura and the masses of stucco sculpture adorning the immense entrances, or *gopuras*, testifying to the prodigious output and the undistinguished quality of the work produced.

South Indian bronze sculpture has a special place in the history of Indian art. A large number of images were made (some of them still in worship in the mid-20th century and others unearthed from the ground by chance), but examples before the 8th century are quite rare. In bronze, as in stone, the 9th and 10th centuries were periods of high achievement, and many images of excellent quality have survived. They are all cast by the lost-wax, or *cire perdue*, process (in which a wax model is used) and technically are very accomplished. In the early stages the forms were smooth and flowing, with a fine balance maintained between the body and the complex jewelry, the lines of which follow and reinforce every movement of the plastic surface. The bronzes of the later period lose this cohesiveness, the ornament, by virtue of its hardness, tending to divide and fragment the body it covers. The modelling also became flatter and sharper, though not quite as rapidly in bronze sculpture as in stone. Ancient traditions of workmanship survive to the present day, and a few guilds of craftsmen continue to make competent if somewhat lifeless images.

Most South Indian bronze images are representations of Hindu divinities, notably Vishnu and Shiva. One particular form deserves special notice as a striking southern contribution to

Indian iconography. It is that of a four-armed Shiva as Lord of the Dance (Nataraja), shown within a flaming halo, or aureole, one hand holding the doubleheaded drum symbolizing sound, or creation, and the other holding the fire that puts an end to all that is created. The palm of the third hand faces the devotee, assuring him of freedom from fear, while the fourth hand points to the raised foot, the place of refuge from ignorance and delusion, which are symbolized by the dwarf demon crushed beneath the other foot. Several splendid images are known, the finest being, perhaps, the great image still worshipped in the Brihadishvara temple at Thanjavur.

Medieval Indian sculpture: Maharashtra and Karnataka

The Karnataka country possessed a flourishing school of sculpture in the 7th and 8th centuries, as seen in examples from Aihole, Pattadakal, and Alampur. As in architecture, influences from the north are discernible, but the style is basically southern, emphasizing rugged strength and power compared to the more elegant and delicate forms of the Tamil country. In Maharashtra, cave temples at Ellora carry the most important examples of this phase of sculpture. Here the tradition is continued of images of great size that, in their primitive strength, partake of the nature of the rock out of which they are carved. A series of large, splendid panels (6th century CE) depicting incidents from Hindu mythology in high relief are to be found in the Rameshvara cave; notable among them is a fearsome representation of the dancing Kali, goddess of death. The Kailasa temple (c. 757–783) has a remarkable group of elephants struggling with lions all around the plinth. Of the several large reliefs, also at Kailasa, the depiction of Ravana shaking Kailasa is a composition of considerable grace and charm.

Toward the 13th and 14th centuries, a very distinctive style developed in the Karnataka country, which was then largely ruled by kings of the Hoysala dynasty. The materials employed are varieties of stone that are soft when freshly quarried but harden on exposure, which may account partially for the extreme richness of the work. The sculpture is in very high relief, often undercut and literally covered with the most elaborate ornaments and jewelry from top to toe. This unrestrained extravaganza is unique even for Indian art, which shows a preference for intricate and elaborate ornament at all stages of its history.

Indian painting

Literary works testify to the eminence of painting as an art form in India, particularly in the decoration of walls, but climate has taken a devastating toll, leaving behind only a few tantalizing examples. By far the bulk of the preserved material consists of miniature painting, initially done on palm leaf but later on paper. The subject matter is generally religious (illustrating divinities, myths, and legends) and literary (illustrating poetry and romances, for example), though the Mughal school was also concerned with historical and secular themes. The styles were rich and varied, often closely connected with one another and sometimes developing and changing rapidly, particularly from the 16th century onward.

The work also shows a surprising vitality under strained circumstances, surviving up to the very eve of the modern period when the other arts had deteriorated greatly.

Prehistoric and protohistoric periods

Painting in India should have a history stretching as far back as any of the other arts but, because of its perishable nature, little has survived. None of the examples found in rock shelters over almost all of India, and chiefly representing scenes of hunting and war, appears to be earlier than the 8th century BC, and all may be as late as the 10th century AD. A faint idea of the painter's art in the Indus Valley civilization can be had from the pottery, elaborately decorated with leaf designs and geometrical patterns.

Ancient wall painting

The earliest substantial remains are those found in rock-cut cave temples at Ajantā, in western India. They belong to the 2nd or 1st century BC and are in a style reminiscent of the relief sculpture at Sānchi. Also found at Ajantā are the most substantial remains of Indian painting of about the 5th century AD and a little later, when ancient Indian civilization was in full flower. The paintings, the work of several ateliers, decorate the walls and ceilings of the numerous cave temples and monasteries at the site. They are executed in the tempera technique on smooth surfaces, prepared by application of plaster. The themes, nominally Buddhist, illustrate the major events of the Buddha's life, the *Jātaka* tales, and the various divinities of the expanding Buddhist pantheon. The ceilings are covered with rich motifs, based generally upon the lotus stem and the world of animals and birds. The style is unlike anything seen in later Indian art, expansive, free, and dynamic. The graceful figures are painted by a sweeping and accomplished brush; and they are given body and substance by modelling in colour and by a schematic distribution of light and shade that has little to do with scientific chiaroscuro. The narrative compositions, handled with utmost dexterity, are a natural outgrowth of the long traditions of relief sculpture and reflect the splendour and maturity of contemporary sculpture. The large images of the *bodhisattvas* in Cave 1, combining rich elegance with spiritual serenity, reflect a vision that sees the shifting world of matter and the transcendental calm of Nirvāṇa as essentially one.

Except for a large and magnificent painting of a dance scene found at the rock-cut cave at Bāgh—a painting executed in a style closely resembling Ajantā—hardly any other work of this great period survives. Cave temples at Bādāmi, in the Karnataka country, and Sittānavāsāl, in Tamil Nadu, probably of the late 6th and 7th centuries AD are already but echoes of the style of the 5th century, which appears to have died out around this time.

Eastern Indian style

Small illustrations on palm leaf, chiefly painted at the great Buddhist establishments of eastern India, appear to have conserved some elements of this ancient style; but they have

lost its dramatic impact, which is replaced by a studied preciousness and an inhibited meticulousness. The surviving paintings date from the 11th and 12th centuries and are conventional icons of the numerous Buddhist gods and goddesses, narrative representations having largely disappeared. With the destruction of these Buddhist centres by the Islamic invader, the east Indian style seems to have come to an end.

Western Indian style

The style of Ajantā is succeeded in western India by what has been appropriately named the western Indian style. Among the earliest examples are a few surviving wall paintings of the Kailāsa temple (mid-8th century) at Ellora and the Jaina temples, built at the same site a hundred years later. The plastic sense of form, so evident at Ajantā, is emphatically replaced by a style that even at this early stage is heavily dependent on line. The contours of the figures are sharp and angular, the forms dry and abstract; and the fluent, stately rhythms of Ajantā have become laboured and halting.

The most copious examples of this style, however, have survived not on the walls of temples but in the large number of illustrated manuscripts commissioned by members of the Jaina community. The earliest of these are contemporary with eastern Indian manuscripts and are also painted on palm leaf; but the style, instead of attempting to cling to ancient traditions, moves steadily in the direction already established at Ellora. It is a perfect counterpart of contemporary sculpture in western India, relying for its effect on line, which progressively becomes more angular and wiry until all naturalism has been deliberately erased. The figures are almost always shown in profile, the full-face view generally reserved for representations of the *tīrthaṅkaras*, or the Jaina saviours. A convention that appears unflinching for the duration of the western Indian style is the eye projecting beyond the face shown in profile, meant to represent the second eye, which would not be visible in this posture. The colours are few and pure: yellow, green, blue, black, and red, which was preferred for the background. In the beginning, the illustrations are simple icons in small panels; but gradually they become more elaborate, with scenes from the lives of the various Jaina saviours as told in the *Kalpa-sūtra* and from the adventures of the monk Kālaka as related in the *Kālakāhāryakathā* the most favoured.

Even greater elaboration was possible with the increasing availability of paper from the late 14th century; with larger surfaces to paint on, by the middle of the 15th century artists were producing opulent manuscripts, such as the *Kalpa-sūtra* in the Devasanopadā library, Ahmadābād. The text is written in gold on coloured ground, the margins gorgeously illuminated with richest decorative and figural patterns, and the main paintings often occupying the entire page. Blue and gold, in addition to red, are used with increasing lavishness, testifying to the prosperity of the patron. The use of such costly materials, however, did not necessarily produce works of quality, and one is often left with the impression of cursive and hasty workmanship. With some variations—but hardly any substantial departures from the bounds that it had set for itself—the style endured

throughout the 16th century and even extended into the 17th. The political subjugation of the country by the forces of Islām may have contributed to the conservatism of the style but did not result in its total elimination, as seems to have been the case in eastern India. Indeed, in the course of its long life, the western Indian school became a national style, painting at other centres in India interpreting and elaborating its forms in their own individual manner. In the province of Orissa, painting on palm leaf and in a manner entirely dependent on the western Indian style has continued up to the present day.

Transition to the Mughal and Rajasthani styles

The belief held earlier by scholars that the new Islāmic rulers of India did not patronize any painting until the rise of the Mughal dynasty in the 16th century is being abandoned in the face of the literary testimony and the discovery or recognition of illustrated manuscripts that were painted at Indian courts. Nor should this be surprising, as the Muslim kings of India had before them the example of other rulers of the Islāmic world who were great patrons of painting in spite of the injunctions of orthodox Islām against the portrayal of living beings. The taste of these Indian rulers, however, did not turn to the western Indian style but to the flourishing traditions of Islāmic painting abroad, notably neighbouring Iran. As many painters as architects had in all probability been invited from foreign countries; and illustrated manuscripts, handily transported, must have been easily available. As a result there appears to have developed what can only be called an Indo-Persian style, based essentially on the schools of Iran but affected to a greater or lesser extent by the individual tastes of the Indian rulers and by the local styles. The earliest known examples are paintings dating from the 15th century onward. The most important are the *Khamseh* (“Quintet”) of Amīr Khosrow of Delhi (Freer Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.), a *Bostān* painted in Mandu (National Museum, New Delhi), and, most interesting of all, a manuscript of the *Neʿmat-nāmeḥ* (India Office Library, London) painted for a sultan of Mālwa in the opening years of the 16th century. Its illustrations are derived from the Turkmen style of Shīrāz but show clear Indian features adapted from the local version of the western Indian style.

Though the western Indian style was essentially conservative, it was not unfailingly so. It began to show signs of an inner change most notably in two manuscripts from Mandu, a *Kalpa-sūtra* and a *Kālakāḥāryakathā* of about 1439, and a *Kalpa-sūtra* painted at Jaunpur in 1465. These works were done in the opulent manner of the 15th century, but for the first time the quality of the line is different, and the uncompromisingly abstract expression begins to make way for a more human and emotional mood. By the opening years of the 16th century, a new and vigorous style had come into being. Although derived from the western Indian style, it is clearly independent, full of the most vital energy, deeply felt, and profoundly moving. The earliest dated example is an *Āraṇyaka Parva* of the *Mahābhārata* (1516; The Asiatic Society, Mumbai), and among the finest are series illustrating the *Bhāgavata-Purāṇa* and the *Caurapañcāśikā* of Bilhaṇa, scattered in collections all over the world. A technically more refined variant of this style, preferring the pale, cool colours of

Persian derivation, a fine line, and meticulous ornamentation, exists contemporaneously and is best illustrated by a manuscript of the ballad *Candāmyana* by Mullā Dāūd (c. first half of the 16th century; Prince of Wales Museum of Western India, Mumbai). The early 16th century thus appears to have been a period of inventiveness and set the stage for the development of the Mughal and Rājput schools, which thrived from the 16th to the 19th century.

Mughal style: Akbar period (1556–1605)

Although the Mughal dynasty came to power in India with the great victory won by Bābar at the Battle of Pānīpat in 1526, the Mughal style was almost exclusively the creation of Akbar. Trained in painting at an early age by a Persian master, Khwāja ‘Abd-uṣ-Ṣamad, who was employed by his father, Humāyūn, Akbar created a large atelier, which he staffed with artists recruited from all parts of India. The atelier, at least in the initial stages, was under the superintendence of Akbar’s teacher and another great Persian master, Mīr Sayyid ‘Alī; but the distinctive style that evolved here owed not a little to the highly individual tastes of Akbar himself, who took an interest in the work, inspecting the atelier frequently and rewarding painters whose work was pleasing.

The work of the Mughal atelier in this early formative stage was largely confined to the illustration of books on a wide variety of subjects: histories, romances, poetic works, myths, legends, and fables, of both Indian and Persian origin. The manuscripts were first written by calligraphers, with blank spaces left for the illustrations. These were executed largely by groups of painters, including a colourist, who did most of the actual painting, and specialists in portraiture and in the mixing of colours. Chief of the group was the designer, generally an artist of top quality, who formulated the composition and sketched in the rough outline. A thin wash of white, through which the initial drawing was visible, was then applied and the colours filled in. The colourist’s work proceeded slowly, the colour being applied in several thin layers and frequently rubbed down with an agate burnisher, a process that resulted in the glowing, enamel-like finish. The colours used were mostly mineral but sometimes consisted of vegetable dyes; and the brushes, many of them exceedingly fine, were made from squirrel’s tail or camel hair.

The earliest paintings (c. 1560–70) of the school of Akbar are illustrations of *Ṭūṭī-nāmeḥ* (“Parrot Book; Cleveland Museum of Art) and the stupendous illustrations of the *Dāstān-e Amīr Ḥamzeh* (“Stories of Amīr Ḥamzeh”; Österreichisches Museum für Angewandte Kunst, Vienna), which originally consisted of 1,400 paintings of an unusually large size (approximately 25 inches by 16 inches [65 by 40 centimetres]), of which only about 200 have survived. The *Ṭūṭī-nāmeḥ* shows the Mughal style in the process of formation: the hand of artists belonging to the various non-Mughal traditions is clearly recognizable, but the style also reveals an intense effort to cope with the demands of a new patron. The transition is achieved in the *Dāstān-e Amīr Ḥamzeh*, in which the uncertainties are overcome in a homogeneous style, quite unlike Persian work in its leaning toward naturalism and filled

with swift, vigorous movement and bold colour. The forms are individually modelled, except for the geometrical ornament used as architectural decor; the figures are superbly interrelated in closely unified compositions, in which depth is indicated by a preference for diagonals; and much attention is paid to the expression of emotion. One of the last manifestations of this bold and vigorous early manner is the *Dārāb-nameh* (c. 1580) in the British Museum.

Immediately following were some very important historical manuscripts, including the *Tārīkh-e Khāndān-e Tīmūrīyeh* ("History of the House of Timūr," c. 1580–85; Khuda Baksh Library, Patna) and other works concerned with the affairs of the Tīmūrīd dynasty, to which the Mughals belonged. Each of these manuscripts contains several hundred illustrations, the prolific output of the atelier made possible by the division of labour that was in effect. Historical events are recreated with remarkable inventiveness, though the explosive and almost frantic energy of the *Dāstān-e Amīr-Ḥamzeh* has begun to subside. The scale was smaller and the work began to acquire a studied richness. The narrative method employed by these Mughal paintings, like that of traditional literature, is infinitely discursive; and the painter did not hesitate to provide a fairly detailed picture of contemporary life—both of the people and of the court—and of the rich fauna and flora of India. Like Indian artists of all periods, the Mughal painter showed a remarkable empathy for animals, for through them flows the same life that flows through human beings. This sense of kinship allowed him to achieve unqualified success in the illustration of animal fables such as the *Anwār-e Suhaylī* ("Lights of Caropus"), of which several copies were painted, the earliest dated 1570 (School of Oriental and African Studies, London). It was in the illustrations to Persian translations of the Hindu epics, the *Mahābhārata* and the *Rāmāyaṇa*, that the Mughal painter revealed to the full the richness of his imagination and his unending resourcefulness. With little precedent to rely on, he was nevertheless seldom dismayed by the subject and created a whole series of convincing compositions. Because most of the painters of the atelier were Hindus, the subjects must have been close to their hearts; and, given the opportunity by a tolerant and sympathetic patron, they rose to great heights. It is no wonder, therefore, that the *Razm-nāmeḥ* (City Palace Museum, Jaipur), as the *Mahābhārata* is known in Persian, is one of the outstanding masterpieces of the age.

In addition to large books containing numerous illustrations, which were the products of the combined efforts of many artists, the imperial atelier also cultivated a more intimate manner that specialized in the illustration of books, generally poetic works, with a smaller number of illustrations. The paintings were done by a single master artist who, working alone, had ample scope to display his virtuosity. In style the works tend to be finely detailed and exquisitely coloured. A *Dīvān* ("Anthology") of Anwarī (Fogg Art Museum, Cambridge, Massachusetts), dated 1589, is a relatively early example of this manner. The paintings are very small, none larger than five inches by 2¹/₂ inches (12 by 6 centimetres) and most delicately executed. Very similar in size and quality are the miniatures illustrating the *Dīvān* of Ḥāfeẓ (Reza Library, Rāmpur). On a larger scale but in the same mood are the

manuscripts that represent the most delicate and refined works of the reign of Akbar: the *Bahāristān* of Jāmī (1595; Bodleian Library, Oxford), a *Khamseh* of Neẓāmī (1593; British Museum, London), a *Khamseh* of Amīr Khosrow (1598; Walters Art Gallery, Baltimore and Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York), and an *Anwār-e Suhaylī* (1595–96; Bharat Kala Bhavan, Vārānasī).

Also prepared in the late 1590s were magnificent copies of the *Akbar-nāmeḥ* (“History of Akbar”; Victoria and Albert Museum, London) and the *Kitāb-e Changīz-nāmeḥ* (“History of Genghis Khan”; Gulistan Library, Tehrān). These copiously illustrated volumes were produced by artists working jointly, but the quality of refinement is similar to that of the poetic manuscripts.

Of the large number of painters who worked in the imperial atelier, the most outstanding were Dasvant and Basāvan. The former played the leading part in the illustration of the *Razm-nāmeḥ*. Basāvan, who is preferred by some to Dasvant, painted in a very distinctive style, which delighted in the tactile and the plastic, and with an unerring grasp of psychological relationships.

Mughal style: Jahāngīr period (1605–27)

The emperor Jahāngīr, even as a prince, showed a keen interest in painting and maintained an atelier of his own. His tastes, however, were not the same as those of his father, and this is reflected in the painting, which underwent a significant change. The tradition of illustrating books began to die out, though a few manuscripts, in continuation of the old style, were produced. For Jahāngīr much preferred portraiture; and this tradition, also initiated in the reign of his father, was greatly developed. Among the most elaborate works of his reign are the great court scenes, several of which have survived, showing Jahāngīr surrounded by his numerous courtiers. These are essentially large-scale exercises in portraiture, the artist taking great pains to reproduce the likeness of every figure.

The compositions of these paintings have lost entirely the bustle and movement so evident in the works of Akbar’s reign. The figures are more formally ordered, their comportment in keeping with the strict rules of etiquette enforced in the Mughal court. The colours are subdued and harmonious, the bright glowing palette of the Akbarī artist having been quickly abandoned. The brushwork is exceedingly fine. Technical virtuosity, however, is not all that was attained, for beneath the surface of the great portraits of the reign there is a deep and often spiritual understanding of the character of the person and the drama of human life.

Many of the paintings produced at the imperial atelier are preserved in the albums assembled for Jahāngīr and his son Shāh Jahān. The *Muraqqah-e Gulshan* is the most spectacular. (Most surviving folios from this album are in the Gulistan Library in Tehrān and the Staatliche Museen Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Berlin; a section is temporarily housed

in Tübingen.) There are assembled masterpieces from Iran, curiosities from Europe, works produced in the reign of Akbar, and many of the finest paintings of Jahāngīr's master painters, all surrounded by the most magnificent borders decorated with a wide variety of floral and geometrical designs. The album gives a fairly complete idea of Jahāngīr as a patron, collector, and connoisseur of the arts, revealing a person with a wide range of taste and a curious, enquiring mind.

Jahāngīr esteemed the art of painting and honoured his painters. His favourite was Abū al-Hasan, who was designated Nādir-uz-Zamān ("Wonder of the Age"). Several pictures by the master are known, among them a perceptive study of Jahāngīr looking at a portrait of his father. Also much admired was Ustād Maṣṣūr, designated Nādir-ul-'Aṣr ("Wonder of the Time"), whose studies of birds and animals are unparalleled. Bishandās was singled out by the emperor as unique in the art of portraiture. Manohar, the son of Basāvan, Govardhan, and Daulat are other important painters of this reign.

Mughal style: Shāh Jahān period (1628–58)

Under Shāh Jahān, attention seems to have shifted to architecture, but painting in the tradition of Jahāngīr continued. The style, however, becomes noticeably rigid. The portraits resemble hieratic effigies, lacking the breath of life so evident in the work of Jahāngīr's time. The colouring is jewel-like in its brilliance, and the outward splendour quite dazzling. The best work is found in the *Shāhjahānnāmeh* ("History of Shāh Jahān") of the Windsor Castle Library and in several albums assembled for the emperor. Govardhan and Bichitra, who had begun their careers in the reign of Jahāngīr, were among the outstanding painters; several works by them are quite above the general level produced in this reign.

Mughal style: Aurangzeb and the later Mughals (1659–1806)

From the reign of Aurangzeb (1659–1707), a few pictures have survived that essentially continue the cold style of Shāh Jahān; but the rest of the work is nondescript, consisting chiefly of an array of lifeless portraits, most of them the output of workshops other than the imperial atelier. Genre scenes, showing gatherings of ascetics and holy men, lovers in a garden or on a terrace, musical parties, carousals, and the like, which had grown in number from the reign of Shāh Jahān, became quite abundant. They sometimes show touches of genuine quality, particularly in the reign of Muḥammad Shāh (1719–48), who was passionately devoted to the arts. This brief revival, however, was momentary, and Mughal painting essentially came to an end during the reign of Shāh 'Ālam II (1759–1806). The artists of this disintegrated court were chiefly occupied in reveries of the past, the best work, for whatever it is worth, being confined to copies of old masterpieces still in the imperial library. This great library was dispersed and destroyed during the uprising of 1857 against the British.

Company school

Rising British power, which assumed political supremacy in the 19th century, resulted in a radical change of taste brought about by the Westernization of important segments of the population. Heavily influenced by Western ideas, a style emerged that represented the adjustment of traditional artists to new fashions and demands. Rooted at Delhi and the erstwhile provincial Mughal capitals of Murshidābād, Lucknow, and Patna, it ultimately spread all over India. Most of the works produced were singularly impoverished, but occasionally there were some fine studies of natural life.

Deccani style

In mood and manner, Deccani painting, which flourished over much of the Deccan Plateau from at least the last quarter of the 16th century, is reminiscent of the contemporary Mughal school. Again, a homogeneous style evolved from a combination of foreign (Persian and Turkish) and Indian elements, but with a distinct local flavour. Of the early schools, the style patronized by the sultans of Bijāpur—notably the tolerant and art-loving Ibrāhīm ‘Ādil Shāh II of Bijāpur, famous for his love of music—is particularly distinguished. Some splendid portraits of him, more lyrical and poetic in concept than contemporary Mughal portraits, are to be found. A wonderful series depicting symbolically the musical modes (*rāgamālā*) also survives. Of illustrated manuscripts, the most important are the *Nujūm-ul-‘ulūm* (“The Stars of the Sciences,” 1590; Chester Beatty Library, Dublin) and the *Tārīf-e Ḥuseyn-Shāhī* (Bharata Itihasa Samshodhaka Mandala, Pune), painted around 1565 in the neighbouring state of Ahmadnagar. The sultanate of Golconda also produced work of high quality—for example, a manuscript of the *Dīvān* of Muḥammad Qulī Quṭb Shāh in the Salar Jang Library, Hyderābād, and a series of distinguished portraits up to the end of the 17th century (dispersed in various collections). The state of Hyderābād, founded in the early 18th century and headed by a grandee of the Mughal Empire, was a great centre of painting. The work that was produced there reflects both Golconda traditions and increasing Mughal and Rajasthani influences.

Rajasthani style

This style appears to have come into being in the 16th century, about the same time the Mughal school was evolving under the patronage of Akbar; but, rather than a sharp break from the indigenous traditions, it represented a direct and natural evolution. Throughout the early phase, almost up to the end of the 17th century, it retained its essentially hieratic and abstract character, as opposed to the naturalistic tendencies cultivated by the Mughal atelier. The subject matter of this style is essentially Hindu, devoted mainly to the illustration of myths and legends, the epics, and above all the life of Krishna; particularly favoured were depictions of his early life as the cowherd of Vraja, and the mystical love of Vraja’s maidens for him, as celebrated in the *Bhāgavata-Purāṇa*, the *Gītagovinda* of Jayadeva, and the Braj Bhasha verses written by Sūrdās and other poets. The style of the

painting, no less than the literature, is a product of the new religious movements, all of which stressed personal devotion to Krishna as the way to salvation. Related popular themes were pictorial representations of the musical modes (*rāgamālā*) and illustrations of poetical works such as the *Rasikapriyā* of Keśavadāsa, which dealt with the sentiment of love, analyzing its varieties and endlessly classifying the types of lovers and beloveds and their emotions. Portraits, seldom found in the early phase, became increasingly common in the 18th century—as did court scenes, scenes of sporting and hunting events, and other scenes concerned with the courtly life of the great chiefs and feudal lords of Rājasthān.

The Rajasthani style developed various distinct schools, most of them centring in the several states of Rājasthān, namely Mewār, Būndi, Kotah, Mārḱār, Bīkaner, Kishangarh, and Jaipur (Amber). It also had centres outside the geographical limits of present-day Rājasthān, notably Gujarāt, Mālwa, and Bundel Khand. The study of Rajasthani painting is still in its infancy, for most of the material has been available for study only since the mid-1940s.

The Mughal and Rajasthani styles were always in contact with each other, but in general the Rajasthani schools were not essentially affected by the work produced at the Mughal court during the greater part of the 17th century. This became less true in the 18th century, when the sharp distinction between the two became progressively obscured, though each retained its distinctive features right up to the end.

Rajasthani style: Mewār

The Mewār school is among the most important. The earliest dated examples are represented by a *rāgamālā* series painted at Chawand in 1605 (Gopi Krishna Kanoria Collection, Patna). These simple paintings, filled with bright colour, are only a step removed from the pre-Rajasthani phase. The style became more elaborate in the first quarter of the 17th century when another *rāgamālā*, painted at Udaipur in 1628 (formerly in the Khajanchi Collection, Bīkaner; now dispersed in various collections), showed some superficial acquaintance with the Mughal manner. This phase, lasting until around 1660, was one of the most important for the development of painting all over Rājasthān. Ambitious and extensive illustrations of the *Bhāgavata*, the *Rāmāyaṇa*, the poems of Sūrdās, and the *Gītagovinda* were completed, all full of strength and vitality. The name of Sāhabadī is intimately connected with this phase; another well-known painter is Manohar. The intensity and richness associated with their atelier began to fade toward the close of the 17th century, and a wave of Mughal influence began to affect the school in the opening years of the 18th century. Portraits, court scenes, and events in the everyday world of the ruling classes are increasingly found. Although the emotional fervour of the 17th century was never again attained, this work is often of considerable charm. The 19th century continued to create work in the tradition of the 18th, one of the most important centres being Nāthdwāra (Rājasthān), the seat of the Vallabha sect. Large numbers of pictures, produced here for the pilgrim trade, were spread over all parts of Rājasthān, northern India, Gujarāt, and the Deccan.

Rajasthani style: Būndi and Kotah

A school as important as that of Mewār developed at Būndi and later at Kotah, which was formed by a partition of the parent state and ruled by a junior branch of the Būndi family. The earliest examples are represented by a *rāgamālā* series of extraordinarily rich quality, probably dating from the end of the 16th century. From the very beginning the Būndi style seemed to have found Mughal painting an inspiring source, but its workmanship was as distinctively Rajasthani as the work of Mewār. The artists of this school always displayed a pronounced preference for vivid movement, which is unique in all of Rājasthān. Toward the second half of the 17th century, work at Būndi came unmistakably under the influence of Mewār; many miniatures, including several series illustrating the *Rasikapriyā*, indicate that this was a period of prolific activity. The sister state of Kotah also appears to have become an important centre of painting at this time, developing a great fondness for hunting and sport scenes, all filled with great vigour and surging strength. This kind of work continued well into the 19th century, and if the workmanship is not always of the highest quality, the style maintained its integrity against the rapidly increasing Western influence right up to the end.

Rajasthani style: Mālwa

It has been suggested but not definitely determined that the school itself does not belong to Mālwa but to some other area, probably Bundelkhand. In contrast to the Būndi school, miniatures generally thought to have been painted in Mālwa are quite archaistic, with mannerisms inherited from the 16th century retained until the end of the 17th. The earliest work is an illustrated version of the *Rasikapriyā* (1634), followed by a series illustrating a Sanskrit poem called the *Amaru Śataka* (1652). There are also illustrations of the musical modes (*rāgamālā*), the *Bhāgavata-Purāṇa*, and other Hindu devotional and literary works. The compositions of all of these pictures is uncompromisingly flat, the space divided into registers and panels, each filled with a patch of colour and occupied by figures that convey the action. This conservative style disappeared after the close of the 17th century. The course of Mālwa painting in the 18th century and later is not known.

Rajasthani style: Mārwar

A *rāgamālā* series dated 1623 reveals that painting in this state shared features common to other schools of Rājasthān. Miniatures of the second half of the 17th century are distinguished by some splendid portraits that owe much to the Mughal school. A very large amount of work was done in the 19th century, all of which is highly stylized but strong in colour and often of great charm.

Rajasthani style: Bīkaner

Of all Rajasthani schools, the Bikaner style, from its very inception in the mid-17th century, shows the greatest indebtedness to the Mughal style. This is due to the presence in the Bikaner atelier of artists who had previously worked in the Mughal manner at Delhi. They and their descendants continued to paint in a style that could only be classed as a provincial Mughal manner had it not been for the quick absorption of influences from the Rajasthani environment and a sympathy for the religious and literary themes favoured by the royal Hindu patrons. Delicacy of line and colour are consistent characteristics of Bikaner painting even when, toward the end of the 18th century, it assumed stylistic features associated with the more orthodox Rajasthani schools.

Rajasthani style: Kishangarh

The Kishangarh school, which came into being toward the mid-18th century, was also indebted to the contemporary Mughal style but combined a rich and refined technique with deeply moving religious fervour. Its inspiring patron in the formative phase was Sāvānt Singh, more of a devotee and a poet than a king. The style established by him, characterized by pronounced mystical leanings and a distinctive facial type, continued to the middle of the 19th century, though at a clearly lower level of achievement.

Rajasthani style: Jaipur (Amber)

The rulers of the state were closely allied to the Mughal dynasty, but paintings of the late 16th and early 17th centuries possessed all of the elements of the Rajasthani style. Little is known about the school until the opening years of the 18th century, when stiff, formal examples appear in the reign of Savāī Jai Singh. The finest works, dating from the reign of Pratāp Singh, are sumptuous in effect and include some splendid portraits and some large paintings of the sports of Krishna. Although the entire 19th century was extremely productive, the work was rather undistinguished and increasingly affected by Western influences. Of the Rajasthani styles of this period, the Jaipur school was the most popular, examples having been found all over northern India.

Pahari style

Closely allied to the Rajasthani schools both in subject matter and technique is the Pahari style, so-named because of its prevalence in the erstwhile hill states of the Himalayas, stretching roughly from Jammu to Garhwāl. It can be divided into two main schools, the Basohlī and the Kāngra, but it must be understood that these schools were not confined to the centres after which they are named but extended all over the area. Unlike Rājasthān, the area covered by the Pahari style is small, and the probability of artists travelling from one area to another in search of livelihood was much greater. Thus, attempts to distinguish regional schools are fraught with controversy, and it has been suggested that a classification based upon ateliers and families is likely to be more tenable than those presently current

among scholars. Because the Basohli and the Kāngra schools show considerable divergences, scholars have postulated the existence of a transitional phase, named the pre-Kāngra style.

Pahari style: Basohli school

The origins of this remarkable style are not yet understood, but it is clear that the style was flourishing toward the close of the 17th century. The earliest dated paintings are illustrations to the *Rasamañjarī* of Bhānudatta (a Sanskrit work on poetics), executed for a ruler of Basohli (1690; Boston Museum of Fine Arts). Bold colour, vigorous drawing, and primitive intensity of feeling are outstanding qualities in these paintings, quite surpassing the work of the plains. In addition to other Hindu works such as the *Gītagovinda* and the *Bhāgavata-Purāṇa*, a fairly large number of idealized portraits have also been discovered.

Pahari style: Kāngra school

The Basohli style began to fade by the mid-18th century, being gradually replaced by the Kāngra style, named after the state of Kāngra but, like the Basohli style, of much wider prevalence. A curvilinear line, easy flowing rhythms, calmer colours, and a mood of sweet lyricism easily distinguish the work from that of the Basohli style. The reasons for this change are to be sought in strong influences from the plains, notably the Mughal styles of Delhi and Lucknow. These influences account for the more refined technique; but whatever was borrowed was transmuted and given a fresh and tender aspect. Among the greatest works are large series illustrating the *Bhāgavata-Purāṇa* (National Museum, New Delhi), the *Gītagovinda*, and the *Satsaī* of Bihārī (both in the collection of the maharaja of Tehrī-Garhwāl), all painted in 1775–80. The corpus of work produced is very large and, although it seldom fails to please, works of high achievement are rare. The school flourished from about 1770 to almost the end of the 19th century, but the finest work was produced largely around 1775–1820.

Modern period

Toward the late 19th century traditional Indian painting was rapidly dying out, being replaced by feeble works in a variety of idioms, all strongly influenced by the West. A reaction set in during the early 20th century, symbolized by what is called the Bengal school. The glories of Indian art were rediscovered, and the school consciously tried to produce what it considered a truly Indian art inspired by the creations of the past. Its leading artist was Abanindranath Tagore and its theoretician was E.B. Havell, the principal of the Calcutta School of Art. Nostalgic in mood, the work was mainly sentimental though often of considerable charm. The Bengal school did a great deal to reshape contemporary taste and to make Indian artists aware of their own heritage. Amrita Sher-Gil, who was inspired by the Postimpressionists, made Indian painters aware of new directions. Mid-20th-century Indian painting is very much a part of the international scene, the artists painting in a variety of

idioms, often attempting to come to terms with their heritage and with the emergence of India as a modern culture.

Indian decorative arts

Fragmentary ivory furniture (c. 1st century AD) excavated at Begrām is one of the few indications of the existence in ancient India of a secular art concerned with the production of luxurious and richly decorated objects meant for daily use. Objects that can be clearly designated as works of decorative art become much more extensive for the later periods, during which Islāmic traditions were having a profound effect on Indian artistic traditions. The reign of the Mughal emperors, in particular, produced works of the most elaborate and exquisite craftsmanship; the decorative tradition is clearly preserved in architectural ornament, though surviving decorative objects themselves, particularly before the 17th century, are far fewer than might be expected. Economic conditions, including competition with machine-made goods imported from English factories, and a change in taste from increasing European influence had disastrous consequences for traditional craftsmanship, especially in the late 19th and 20th centuries.

Pre-Islāmic period

Of the very few objects surviving from the pre-Islāmic period, the most important are fragments of ivory caskets, chairs, and footstools found at Begrām, in eastern Afghanistan, but obviously of Indian origin and strongly reminiscent of the school of Mathurā in the 1st century AD. The work is profusely decorated with carved panels and confirms the wide reputation for superb ivories that India had in ancient times. Nothing as spectacular has come down from the succeeding periods, but stray examples such as the so-called Charlemagne chessman (c. 8th century; Cabinet des Medailles, Paris) and two magnificent throne legs, of Orissan workmanship, carved in the shape of griffins with elephant heads (13th century; Freer Gallery of Art, Washington D.C., and Philadelphia Museum of Art), indicate that ivory craftsmanship was always vital. Ancient traditions, relatively unaffected by Islāmic influence, continued in southern India up to modern times. An exquisitely carved box from Vijayanagar (16th century; Prince of Wales Museum of Western India, Mumbai) is representative; many other exquisite objects of this period and later are among the treasures of South Indian temples.

There is even less evidence of what the decorative work in metal was like. The practice of re-using the metal by melting unserviceable items may account for the paucity of objects, for there is little doubt that the craft was always flourishing. A hoard found at Kolhāpur, consisting of plates, various kinds of vessels, lamps and *objets d'art*, including a superb bronze elephant with riders, constitutes the most important surviving group of metal objects and is datable to about the 2nd century AD. Some fine examples of ritual utensils, notably elaborate incense burners, of the 8th–9th century have been excavated at Nālandā; and a large number of 14th-century ceremonial vessels of complex design and excellent

workmanship, and apparently belonging to the local temple, were discovered at Kollur, in Mysore state.

Gold played an extremely important role in the manufacture of jewelry, but once again the finds are hardly commensurate with tradition. Small amounts of gold jewelry have been excavated at Mohenjo-daro and Harappā (3rd millennium BC); and, in the historical period, a very important group, of delicate workmanship, has been excavated at Taxila (c. 2nd century AD).

From earliest times, India has been famous for the variety and magnificence of its textiles. In this case, however, the Indian climate has been particularly destructive; virtually nothing has survived the heat and moisture. Besides the testimony of literature and the evidence of figural sculpture, only a few fragments of printed textiles are preserved—at Fustāt in Egypt, where they had been exported. These date approximately to the 14th century.

Islāmic period



dagger with a horse-head handle

Dagger with a horse-head handle, steel, jade, gold, rubies, diamond, and emerald, from India, Mughal period, 18th century; in the Honolulu Academy of Arts.

Traditions of craftsmanship established during the Islāmic period came to full flower during the reign of the Mughal dynasty. Surviving works of decorative art are more abundant, though once again there are hardly as many examples as might be expected, particularly from the 16th and 17th centuries.

According to literary testimony and the few available examples, the finest objects were undoubtedly made in the imperial workshops set up in large number at the capital and in the great cities of the empire, where they were nourished by local traditions. Well-organized, these shops specialized in particular items,

such as textiles, carpets, jewelry, ornamental arms and armour, metalware, and jade. Textile manufacture must have been enormous, considering the demands of court and social etiquette and ritual. Contributing to the popularity of tapestries, curtains, draperies, canopies, and carpets in contemporary architecture were the nomadic tenting traditions of the Mughal rulers.

The variety of techniques employed in the manufacture of textiles was infinite, ranging from printed and painted patterns to the exquisite embroidery decoration of woolen shawls and the costly figured brocading of silk. An important contribution to carpet weaving was the landscape carpet that reproduced pictorial themes inspired by miniature painting. Much of the surviving textile work dates from the 18th century or later, though the 16th and 17th centuries produced works of the most outstanding quality.

In response to growing European trade, a considerable amount of furniture (chairs, cabinets, chests of drawers, and the like) was produced, mostly wood inlaid with ivory. Many of these pieces have been preserved in the kinder European climate. Although the furniture made for export gives some idea of the craft in India, it must be emphasized that only the ornamental and figural work was Indian, while the form was European. Also in a hybrid Indo-European style were the Christian objects produced by a local school of ivory carvers at Goa.

Metal objects of sumptuous quality were also made, a unique example of which is a splendid, elaborately chiselled 16th-century cup in the Prince of Wales Museum of Western India in Mumbai. This tradition was continued in the 17th and particularly the 18th century, when vessels made of a variety of metals and adorned with engraved, chiselled, inlaid, and enamelled designs were very popular. Arms and armour, in particular, were decorated with the skill of a jeweler. Particularly striking are the carved hilts, often done in animal shapes.

Jade or jadeite was much fancied by the rich and was used together with crystal to make precious vessels as well as sword and dagger hilts. A rather large number of 18th- and 19th-century objects have survived, but they are often of nondescript quality. The greatest period for jade carving seems to have been the 17th century; a few outstanding examples associated with the emperors Jahāngīr and Shāh Jahān are of singular delicacy and perfection. The practice of inlaying jade, and also stone, with precious or semiprecious stones became more popular with the reign of Shāh Jahān and increasingly characteristic of Indian jade craftsmanship from that time on.

Architectural decoration provides a clear idea of the range of ornamental patterns used by the Mughal artist. They consisted mainly of arabesques (intricate interlaced patterns made up of flower, foliage, fruit, and sometimes animal and figural outlines) and infinitely varied geometric patterns—motifs shared with the rest of the Muslim world—together with floral scrolls and other designs adapted from Indian traditions. As a whole, the Mughal decorative style tends to endow ornamental patterns with a distinctive plasticity not seen in the more truly two-dimensional Iranian and Arab work. From the 17th century, a type of floral spray became the most favoured motif and was found on almost every decorated object. The motif, symmetrical but relatively naturalistic at the beginning, became progressively stiff and stylized, but never lost its importance in the ornamental vocabulary.

General characteristics of Sri Lankan arts

The art of Sri Lanka is closely allied to that of India but presents several distinctive features that make a separate treatment convenient. There is, first, the considerable transformation of Indian influences, resulting in an idiom of great power and individuality. Sri Lanka also often served as a geographical pocket in which styles that had disappeared in India were preserved, which accounts for the anachronistic features of some phases of Sinhalese art. It also appears that although predominant influences were from neighbouring southern India,

this was not exclusively so, and styles flourishing in western and northern India, too, contributed to the formulation of Sinhalese art. The difficulties in the study of the art are considerable: the long, unbroken Buddhist traditions and the piety of the rulers and the people have led to the successive renovation of monuments; and in the absence of firmly dated monuments, one of the few relatively reliable tools of study is comparison with Indian art, an approach full of pitfalls and shortcomings.

Sri Lankan architecture

The most impressive monuments are the great *stūpas*, some of gigantic size and considerable antiquity but often reconstructed in the course of the centuries. They generally have a triple circular base, and as in early Indian *stūpas*, a hemispherical dome with a miniature railing on top, and a multiple parasol that tends to solidify into a conical structure in the course of time. The material is brick, sometimes covered with plaster and white paint. An important feature are the platforms (*vāhalakaḍas*) at the cardinal points, often adorned with sculpture. There are many *stūpas* at the ancient capital of Anurādhapura, at Polonnaruva, and at other sites; of these the Jetavana at Anurādhapura is the largest, though now largely ruined.

Small *stūpas* were often placed in a circular building with a domical metal and timber roof supported by concentric rows of stone pillars. This type of building, known in ancient India as the *caityagṛha*, was very popular in Sri Lanka, though it had disappeared at a fairly early period in the country of its origin. A famous example is the *vaṭadāgē* at Polonnaruva, a structure of great elegance. The dome itself, being of perishable material, has not survived. The *geḍigē*, or large rectangular hall with a corbelled brick vault, housing a Buddha image, is first found in Sri Lanka from the 8th century AD; the most impressive example is the Laṅkātilaka at Polonnaruva built by Parākramabāhu I in the 12th century.

Literature testifies to the existence of elaborate royal and priestly residences of wood, which have largely disappeared. The Lohapāsāda at Anurādhapura, traditionally ascribed to Duṭṭhagāmaṇi (101–77), was originally a nine-story building, now destroyed except for the large number of stone pillars that supported the upper floors. Sigiriya, a 6th-century fortress city with extensive remains, is another notable example of secular architecture.

Sri Lankan sculpture

The earliest sculpture, perhaps, is from the platforms, or *vāhalakaḍas*, of the Kanṭaka Cetiya, at Mihintalē, and reveals an archaistic style indebted to 1st-century-BC Indian sculpture of Sānchi and Amarāvati regions. A certain simplicity and restraint characteristic of most Sinhalese work is present even at this early stage. The first Buddha images show a pronounced relationship to examples from Andhradeśa of the 2nd–3rd century AD but often possess considerable vigour, revealing the contribution of the local sculptor. Several fine

images are known, one of the best of which is at Ruanveli, Anurādhapura, now very badly restored.

Dated monuments are absent from the 5th to the 12th centuries, but an approximate idea of stylistic development can be obtained by a comparative study of Indian examples. An outstanding image, rather hideously repaired in recent years, is a great seated Buddha in Anurādhapura, the smooth and abstract modelling of which recalls the school of Sārnāth of the 5th–6th century. At Isurumuni, near Anurādhapura, are some marvellous reliefs carved on rocks. One of these depicts elephants at play, and another, a seated man with the head of a horse carved in the background. These fine sculptures recall the South Indian style of the 7th century. A radiant amorous couple carved in relief on a stone slab, also at Isurumuni, represents Sinhalese sculpture at its most joyous.

Of about the same period or a little later, are exquisitely sculptured staircases decorated with moonstones, and stelae, or commemorative pillars, carved with a guardian *nāga*, a spirit with combined superhuman and serpent qualities. The latter are among the finest examples of Sinhalese sculpture, the full and weighty modelling relieved by the skillful movement of clearly chiselled ornament. The Ratnapāsāda at Anurādhapura and the eastern staircase of the *vaṭadāgē* at Polonnaruva possess particularly superb specimens. Moonstones—decorated with bands of floral motifs, geese, and a row of animals consisting of a lion, bull, elephant, and horse—placed at the bottom of the staircase, testify to the great taste and elegance that mark Sinhalese decorative carving. At Anurādhapura and related sites a certain freedom characterizes the work, while the slightly later examples at Polonnaruva are stiffer but technically brilliant.

A colossal Buddha, 42 feet (13 metres) high, at Avukana, testifies to the increasing hardness of the Sinhalese style, which, even so, never ceases to be moving. Large images of the Buddha at the Gal Vihāra and a figure supposedly representing Parākramabāhu at Potgal Vihāra, both at Polonnaruva, are of the 12th century. They are figures of great majesty and surpass contemporary work in southern India. After the 13th century, Sinhalese sculpture began to decline, though work of some decorative value was produced up to the 19th century.

Sri Lankan painting

The rock at Sigiriya is adorned with a series of exquisitely painted *apsarases* (nymphs) showering flowers, their torsos emerging from clouds. The paintings are dated to the 6th century AD; in their plastic resiliency they are reminiscent of contemporary work in India. The next important group of wall paintings come from Tivaṃka-patimā-ghara at Polonnaruva. Although dated to the 12th or 13th century, the figures continue to be modelled, relatively unaffected by the linear distortions of the western Indian style that was flourishing in India. Eighteenth-century paintings, with their flat figures arranged in horizontal rows, reflect contemporary styles of southern India.

Pramod Chandra

Citation Information

Article Title: South Asian arts

Website Name: Encyclopaedia Britannica

Publisher: Encyclopaedia Britannica, Inc.

Date Published: 16 April 2024

URL: <https://www.britannica.com><https://www.britannica.com/art/South-Asian-arts>

Access Date: July 12, 2024